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# CRITICAL MIRTH: A DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR BURLESQUES OF THE MEDIEVAL METRICAL CHIVALRIC ROMANCES OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

by

©

GREGORY BAILEY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Critical Mirth: A Discussion of the Major Burlesques of the Medieval Metrical Chivalric Romances of England and Scotland," submitted by Gregory Bailey in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Muriel A. Whitaker
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Date Aug. 23, 1976

# ABSTRACT

Works of the burlesque genre are at once sources of laughter and critical evaluations of either a people's life or of their literature. Medieval examples of the genre, however, have received comparatively little critical examination, with the exception of "Sir Thopas", which has been very thoroughly investigated by critics mainly because it was written by Chaucer rather than because of its ample intrinsic value. "The Tournament of Tottenham" and "King Berdok", both composed by anonymous authors, have not been analysed as they deserve; nor have the Scots works generally been subjected to close scrutiny--possibly because of difficulties with the dialect. William Dunbar's "The Turnament betuix the Tailyour and the Sowtar" and his "Of Sir Thomas Norny", David Lindesay's "The Iusting betuix James Watsoun and Ihone Barbour", and Alexander Scott's "The Iusting and Debait vp at the Drum betuix W$^{am}$ adamsone and johine sym" lack the range of the works by the anonymous authors and Chaucer, but they still are worthy of more consideration than they have been given.

In order to facilitate discussion of the above works, the typical elements of romance utilized by the poets, and the difference between comic works and the various types of burlesque, are established. Subsequently the chivalric burlesques are examined for their humour and didacticism. Incidentally the burlesque sub-genre or genres (parody, mock poem, travesty or hudibrastic poem) to which they belong are discovered. Form and style are examined in an attempt to determine the poet's ability and to enhance comprehension of his use of romance features in the ridicule of characters and actions. Some attention is paid to the way the poet's technique reveals any lesson he may be attempting to teach about the literature of his time. The author's attempt to modify foibles of society, either in that class he depicts in his poem, or in a more noble one, are discussed with reference to their historical and literary milieu. Literary analogues are drawn where pertinent from classical and Continental sources.

In conclusion the works are compared to each other for their literary and social criticism and their possible audience. From this discussion of their didacticism and humour, some evaluation is made of their respective worth as burlesques and their relevance to modern times.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| E. E. T. S. | Early English Text Society |
| *ELN* | *English Language Notes* |
| *JEGP* | *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* |
| *MLN* | *Modern Language Notes* |
| *MLR* | *Modern Language Review* |
| *MP* | *Modern Philology* |
| *N&Q* | *Notes and Queries* |
| *NM* | *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* |
| *Phil Q* | *Philological Quarterly* |
| *PMLA* | *Publications of the Modern Language Association* |
| *RES* | *Review of English Studies* |
| *SAQ* | *South Atlantic Quarterly* |
| *SP* | *Studies in Philology* |
| S. T. S. | Scottish Text Society |
| *TLS* | *Times Literary Supplement* |
| *UTQ* | *University of Toronto Quarterly* |

# INTRODUCTION

Literary burlesques appear as a genre declines, when actions, settings and phraseology are becoming stereotyped. Romances were first written in English around the middle of the thirteenth century, when the genre was already in decline in France where it had been popular for over a hundred years. The fact that the first English burlesques appeared towards the end of the fourteenth century, less than fifty years after the first representatives of the genre in French, suggests that romance had a shorter life in Britain or that the English romances did not achieve the same standard as the French. Most English romances were based on French originals, and only in a few cases were improvements made on the source (for example, "Launfal" and Beues of Hamtoun).[1] The majority of tail-rhyme romances (the form most commonly burlesqued) were

> more or less competent rehashes of conventional plot motifs and romances by virtue of this, and of their atmospheric qualities rather than their exploration of the chivalric experience.[2]

---

[1] See introduction to The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun, ed. E. Kölbing (London: E. E. T. S., 1894 [1885]).

[2] A. C. Gibbs, Middle English Romances (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 26.

The production of stories containing flat character types, stock episodes and settings frequently revealed through monotonous repetitive descriptions and often padded by catalogues of food, wine, birds, flowers and spices, was partially due to the idealization, contemporization and anglicization of the tales.[3] In part poems became conventional because "the ways in which [a knight] may dispose of an opponent in tournaments and battle are limited,"[4] and even when "the poet occasionally foists in a giant or a dragon to lend variety to his hero's adventures"[5] the limitation continued and unfortunately extended to the poets' phraseology. For example,

> He was the wighteste man at nede
> That thurte riden on any stede

occurs nearly verbatim in lines 9-10, 25-26, 87-88 and 1970-1971 of "Havelok";[6] "Tho was Launfal glad and blithe" is found in "Sir Launfal",[7] lines 586 and 595; and Lybeaus Desconus sends each of the knights he defeats to Arthur with the same command.[8] Because of the similarity of description and the use of the same or similar phrases to describe an incident, it became difficult to distinguish one episode from another. Sometimes lines were inserted for their rhyme:

---

[3] "Sir Orfeo" is a modernization of the classical story of Orpheus and Eurydice, with a happy ending and the Celtic other world replacing the classical; the hunt description in particular is medieval, Thrace is identified with Winchester, and Orfeo and his steward are ideal knights.

[4] A. C. Baugh, "The Middle English Period," _A Literary History of England_, ed. Baugh _et al_. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 174.

[5] _Ibid_.

[6] "Havelok", in D. Sands, ed., _Middle English Verse Romances_ (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966). All citations from "Havelok" are to this text.

[7] "Sir Launfal", in Sands, _op_. _cit_. All citations are to this text.

> Hit was at Christemasse
> Neither more ne lasse
>
> ("King Horn", 805-06)[9]
>
> A worde y muste speke with the
> All priuely, y you beseche,
> That thise men here not oure speche
>
> (*Guy of Warwick*, 6352-4
> Caius)[10]
>
> To farre y am kaste in vnmyghte
> My herte is heuy, and noo-thing lighte
>
> (*Guy* 433-434 Caius)

to aver the truth of the tale: "Mo than an hundred, withuten leye" and "That durste hi sweren on a book!" ("Havelok" 2117, 2127); to cite *auctorité*: "As þe Frenssch tale teld" (*Lybeaus* 2122 Cotton), "So hit is fonde in frensche tale" (*Beues* 888 A; cf. 1782, 4486), and "In romance as we rede" ("Launfal" 741); to appeal for attention: "Litheth and lestneth and holdeth your tonge" ("Gamelyn" 169, 341)[11] and "Harkeneþ lordynges fre"

---

[8] *Lybeaus Desconus*, ed. M. Mills (London: E. E. T. S., 1969). Indication will be made as to use of the Cotton Caligula A II or Lambeth Palace manuscripts.

[9] "King Horn", in Sands, *op. cit.* All citations from "Horn" are to this text.

[10] *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, ed. J. Zupitza (London: E. E. T. S., 1887; also *The Romance of Guy of Warwick, Second or 15th Century Version*, ed. Zupitza (London: E. E. T. S., 1875-76). The 1887 edition contains both Caius and Auchinleck manuscripts; indication will be made as to which text is used. The Auchinleck numeration changes after line 7306, each stanza then being numbered and containing 12 lines.

[11] "Gamelyn", in Sands, *op. cit.* All citations are to this text.

(*Lybeaus* 434 Cotton); or for refreshment: "Fill me a cuppe of full good ale" ("Havelok" 14). The minstrel in presenting his tale by reference to the generosity of his hero intimated that he would be pleased to be rewarded in more practical ways than by God's blessing or a prayer. Orfeo's steward says,

> Of that ichave, thou shalt have some
> Everich gode harpour is welcom me to
> ("Sir Orfeo", 492-493)[12]

Launfal "gaf giftis largeliche" ("Launfal" 28), and Guy "To all men yiftes yiue he wolde" (*Guy* 147 Caius). The minstrel tended to use standard transitions to end a section: "Lete we now this fals knight" ("Gamelyn" 615), "Of Goldeboru shull we nou laten" ("Havelok" 328), and "Now reste we her a whyle/ . . . / And telle we oþer tales" (*Lybeaus* 1219-21 Cotton), as well as tags or formulized phrases: "That semely was of sight", "The knight to horse began to springe," "With solas and with pride," "In werre ne in turnement" ("Launfal" 945, 1015, 1020, 331); "Nighte ne daye he ne stente" (*Guy* 6334 Caius); "As bryȝt as blos[m] e [sic] on brere," "As prynces prowde yn pryde," "sterne strokes þre," "As sperk þoȝ out of glade," "Þourȝ gypell, plate and mayll" (*Lybeaus* 579, 816, 1391, 624, 1176 [and 1383]). All such additional material did little to further the plot or to depict character.[13]

---

[12] "Sir Orfeo", in Sands, *op*. *cit*. All citations are to this text.

[13] For full discussion and examples see Carl Schmirgel's appendix to Kölbing's edition of *Beues of Hamtoun*, pp. xlv-lxvi. He examines *Beues* for typical expressions and repetitions, finding parallel phrases in many other romances. He cites other critics' work containing similar examinations: *vide* Zielke's edition of "Sir Orfeo" for expressions, Kölbing's

The English poet was normally faithful to his French sources in retelling incidents, but he tended to give them a more popular tone through abridgment, use of dialogue, and the introduction of English features.[14] He frequently associated his hero with an existing body of material to increase his stature or prove his authenticity (e. g., the comparison of Richard with Lancelot, Bevis and Guy in "Richard Coer de Lion"). Some poems in their cyclic nature show evidence of belonging to an older tradition than chivalry or Christianity: Ywain, in "Ywain and Gawain", replaces his defeated opponent as knight of the well, lord of the castle and husband of the lady, incidentally showing the immediate political necessity in the Middle Ages of replacing one champion by another.[15]

Religious miracles occur in several stories (Charlemagne romances, *Sir Gawain*, *Beues*, *Guy of Warwick*, "Sir Cleges"), while stories with fairies ("Launfal", *Lybeaus Desconus*), giants "Carl of Carlisle", "Roland and Vernagu", *Beues*), dragons (*Guy*, *Beues*, Laȝamon's *Brut*), sorcerers (*Lybeaus*) and transformations (*Lybeaus*, "Carl of Carlisle", "The Turke and Gawain", "King of Tars", "Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame

edition of *Amis & Amiloun* for tail rhyme style, Zupitza's remarks on *Guy of Warwick* and Kölbing's on "Sir Tristrem" (p. xlv). Presumably for the last two references Schmirgel is referring to their editions of those works. Further parallels between *Beues* and other works are to be found scattered through Kölbing's notes to his edition of *Beues*.

[14] See above, p. 2, n. 3.

[15] See also *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* for cyclic structure.

Ragnell") are common.

Plots were limited, with parallel incidents frequently occurring in longer works like *Beues of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick* , while the shorter "Havelok the Dane" has in its first part two nearly parallel story-lines. Many romances are stories involving the disruption of families (*Torrent*, *Isumbras*, *Emaré*, *Beues*, *Percyvalle of Galles*, "Lai le Freine"), or the separation of lovers ("King Horn", *Guy*, *Beues*, *Earl of Tolous*, "Sir Orfeo"), love then acting as a motivating force for the action; religion is found at the core of many other tales (*Isumbras*, *Guy*, *Ferumbras* and other Charlemagne romances). Neither love nor religion is central to the remaining tales; because it was the nature of a knight to have adventures, he endured them ("The Avowynge of Arthur", "Carl of Carlisle", parts of *Beues*). In some romances the knight comes to a realization of self, growing from immaturity to manhood through his adventures (*Sir Gawain*, *Guy*). Courtly love does not appear in as many English as French poems, possibly because in some English works written to provide a parvenu lord with a noble background (*Guy*), bastardy was frowned upon and therefore adulterous relationships were omitted. The *amour-courtois* tradition normally required the knight to woo the lady, although occasionally the positions were reversed ("Launfal", "King Horn").[16] The restoration of children to their parents or to the lordship of the country their father had held is a frequently used theme ("Havelok", "Horn", "Degarré", *Beues*).

---

[16] See also below, pp. 15, 57, 64, 68-69.

Many romances open with a minstrel call to attention, such as "Lordinges, herkenþ to me tale!/ Is merier þan þe niȝtingale" (Beues 1-2 A); "Alle beon hi blithe/ That to my song lithe!" ("Horn" 1-2); or "Herkneth to me, gode men" ("Havelok" 1). Others commence with a prayer for those who will listen to the geste:

Jhesu Cryst our Sauyour
And hys modyr, þat swete flowr,
Helpe hem at her nede
Þat harkeneþ of a conquerour

(Lybeaus 1-4 Cotton)

Lord that is of mightis most
Fadir and Sone, and Holy Gost,
Bring us out of sinne
And lene us grace so for to wirke
To love both God and Holy Kirke
That we may hevenne winne.
Lystnes, lordingis that been hende

("Athelston", 1-7)[17]

or a brief homily like that of twenty lines which opens Guy of Warwick. The remainder start in media res by naming the subject of the tale ("Orfeo", "Launfal", "The Squire of Low Degree"). Those tales which do not immediately present their subject normally do so shortly after the opening formula when they give either his lineage:

Geynleyn
Be-yete he was of Syr Gaweyn

(Lybeaus 6-7 Cotton)

Of Murry the Kinge . . .
Godhild het his quen . . .
He hadde a sone that het Horn

("Horn" 4, 7, 9)

---

[17] "Athelston", in Sands, op. cit. All citations are to this text.

> [Orfeo's] fader was comen of King Pluto
> And his moder of King Juno
>
> ("Orfeo" 5-6)

a brief list of the delights their audience will hear if they listen as requested:

> of an Erle j shall yow telle . . .
> And of hys stewarde . . .
> And of the stewarde sone . . .
> And how he loued a mayden sheen . . .
> And how that he reynbroun beegate . . .
> And how he wente into wilderness
>
> (*Guy* 21-31 Caius)

> Ich wile ȝow tellen . . .
> Of þat kniȝt and of is fadre
>
> (*Beues* 7-8 A)

or the theme of the poem: "Of falsnesse, hou it will ende" ("Athelston" 8).

Frequently within the first twenty or thirty lines the hero is briefly described:

> Gynleyn was fayr of syȝt,
> Gentyll of body, of face bryȝt
>
> (*Lybeaus* 13-14 Cotton)

> [Guy was] a fayre yonge thynge,
> That gentil was and fayre bee-seen
>
> (*Guy* 24-25 Caius)

> The squir was curteous and hend . . .
> An hardy man he was and wight
> Both in bataile and in fight
>
> ("The Squire of Low
> Degree", 3, 9-10) [18]

> [Orfeo was]
> A stalworth man and hardy bo;
> Large and curteis he was also
>
> ("Orfeo" 3-4)

---

[18] "The Squire of Low Degree", in Sands, *op*. *cit*. All citations are to this text.

[Horn] was bright so the glas;
He was whit so the flur;
Rose-red was his colur.
He was fair and eke bold

("Horn" 14-17)

His abilities in recreational activities are then outlined: Horn was to be instructed in the mysteries of wood and river, harping, carving at table and cup-bearing ("Horn" 233-35, 237-38); Launfal "gaf giftis largeliche" ("Launfal" 28)--incidentally showing the main interest of this poet--while Guy

radde
Of wode, & riuer & oþer game . . .
Michel he couþe of hauk & hounde,
of estriche faucouns of gret mounde

(*Guy* 170-76 Auch )

Now the adventures start: battles, tournaments, single combats and attempts to win or regain lovers. The basic plot of *Guy of Warwick* may serve as an example of the ideal romance plot despite Ellis' considering it dull, tedious and tiresome.[19] The tale is close to the *sens* and *métier* of the French romances and was probably the most popular and enduring of the English redactions.

In order to win Felice, Guy endeavours to become the best knight in the world. His adventures are rather repetitive and, after he has married her, he engages in another series of encounters similar in detail to his earlier ones. He undertakes new voyages and trials, not to extend his fame, however, but to thank God for the prowess He has given him. Realizing his chivalric ability before he won Felice had been

[19] George Ellis, ed., *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (London, 1848; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1968), pp. 188-189.

used for selfish earthly ends, Guy determines to do penance by helping his fellow man in order to achieve heaven. In this respect, *Guy* is a precursor of the Grail quest poems, besides showing that knighthood entails both earthly and heavenly duties. In one of his later adventures, one which incidentally was recorded by some chroniclers as historical fact,[20] Guy represents the English in a single combat against the Danish giant Colbrand. The event is set in Athelstan's reign (925-940 A. D.).[21]

Guy, who is apparently a pilgrim, needs to be armed before he can fight Colbrand. He puts on "an hawberke of dowble mayle;/ Vppon hys hed an helme ryght/ W*i*t*h* a crest of gold" (*Guy* 10531-33 Caius). The helm has a "charbocle" on its front, "a colu*er* of gold,/ The Ioly creste in hys fote gan hold./ Ther-abow3t ther was a floure" (10540-42 Caius). He has iron and steel hose, gold spurs and a shield, a good sword and a spear, while the Auchinleck manuscript mentions his gloves and leg-armour in addition to the above.

On reaching the battle ground, Guy prays for God's help, the two kings make their contract, and Colbrand appears. His armour is all of steel splints, his helm is strong, and beneath it (according to the Caius manuscript) he has a bascinet. His weapons (in total more than two hundred) include javelins, axes, gisarmes and swords. Colbrand throws three of his darts, one of which passes through Guy's shield and armour without harming him. Guy strikes Colbrand's shield, breaking it. Colbrand, missing Guy with his sword, cuts his horse in half so that Guy falls to the ground. Immediately jumping to his feet, he strikes at Colbrand's head, which is beyond his reach, wounding him instead on the shoulder. In response Colbrand hits Guy on the helm, denuding it of all its decoration. Colbrand, somewhere in the exchange, must have acquired a shield to replace the one Guy broke in their first clash, for Guy now cuts into Colbrand's shield, breaking his sword. Guy asks for the loan of a battle-axe, a request to which Colbrand, not being a fool, responds "So me helpe tormagaunte/ Wepon for me shalt thow none have" (10723-24 Caius); however, Guy steals an axe when Colbrande looks behind to verify Guy's statement that weapons are being brought. Angry at the subterfuge, Colbrand strikes at Guy, but his sword sticks into the ground; when he bends to draw it out, Guy smites off his right arm, and as the giant attempts to take his sword in his left hand, Guy shears off Colbrand's head. The Danes, true to their word, leave England, while Athelstan and the English rejoice.

---

[20] See *An Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*, ed. E. Zattl (London: E. E. T. S., 1935), lines 595-602.

[21] An example of the poet's tagging his hero to an historical figure. See above, p. 5.

There is no full description of Guy; after his death Athelstan says, "He was a Geaunt styffe and gryme/ This gentyll Gye, of whome I talke" (11009-10 Caius), but this does not give an image of the typical knight. In Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" there are two accounts from which a composite picture of the ideal knight may be drawn. Lygurge, "the grete kyng of Trace", is first described:

> Blak was his berd, and manly was his face;

> The cercles of his eyen in his heed,
> They gloweden bitwixen yelow and reed,
> And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,
> With kempe heeris on his browes stoute;
> Hys lymes grete, his brawnes harde and stronge,
> His shuldres brode, his armes rounde and longe
> . . . .
> His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak;
> As any ravenes fethere it shoon for blak
> (2130-36, 2143-44)[22]

Then Emetreus appears, a blond-haired King whose description supplies the facial features:

> His nose was heigh, his eyen bright citryn,
> His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn
> (2167-78)

while his manner is noble:

> And as a leon he his lookyng caste
> . . . .
> His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge
> His voys was as a trompe thonderynge
> (2171-74)

One of the best descriptions of a tournament follows, after interesting details of preparations (2491-2511), gossip concerning the merits of the warriors and the outcome of the fight (2513-22), Theseus' forbidding the use of certain weapons (javelins, poleaxes and short knives) in his rules for the combat (2537-60), and a procession to the lists (2565-96). Of the jousting and "of al this make I now no mencioun" (2208) but move on to the tournament in Beues of Hamtoun, which contains the sparse details of a tourney without the excellent mass of description Chaucer gives.

As the tournament of the "Knight's Tale" had been announced a year before, so the tourney at Aumbeforce "is cride for a maide faire" (Beues 3767 A). The prize is to be the hand of the maid, while her dowry is the kingdom. The knights include tokens in their equipment "Wherby the lady shulde them knowe" (3476 M)[23] and proceed to the lists where

---

[22] All Chaucer citations are to The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

> Þe trompes gonne here bemes blowe;
> Þe kniȝtes riden out in a rowe,
> & þo þe tornement be-gan
> (3793-95 A)

and "mani a man" (3696 A) had gone "þe tornement to be-holde" (3797 A), while Helyanour, the prize and tournament judge, watches from the castle (3483-86 M). The knights joust with spears (3508 M) and "wyþ swerdes and wiþ maces gode" (3800 A). In the M version

> The fyrst knyght, that Beuys rode agayne
> Was themperours son of Almayne
> And beuys at him bare so fast,
> That hors and man to grounde he cast.
> (3489-92 M)

In similar fashion he disposes of the "erle Florens" (3493-98 M) and "duke Antoyne of Burgoyne" (3499-3500 M). Terry now enters the joust to vanquish first the "kynges broder of Hungry" (3514 M), then the earl Hamaut. After these most noble encounters, the two heroes are assailed by the other knights, but "There was no knyght, verely,/ That myght wythstande Beuys nor Terry" (3521-22 M). The next day Bevis is declared champion of the games and taken to Helyanour, his sole prize; no other prize is awarded, in contradistinction to other romance tournaments where there are many rewards for the victor. The only other profit Bevis has from the tournament would be the "mani gode stede" (3824 A) that Terry won for him.

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[23] My references to Beues are usually to the A (Auchinleck) version, but for the account of the tournament both the A and the M (Manchester) are used. M is generally closer to the French original than A. See Kölbing's introduction to Beues, pp. xxxvii-xli, for a full discussion of the textual relationships.

Guy in an analogous incident (see Caius 793 ff.) hears from his host (who seems surprised that he had not heard of it before) of a tournament which is to occur the next day. He rides in the company of barons to the lists, where he overthrows many renowned knights, taking their horses as right or returning them to their owners in order to gain the losers' affection. Guy, like Bevis, is judged the winner, only by the acclaim of the other combatants, not by the lady, and receives his prizes of a swan-white gerfalcon, a steed, and two white greyhounds, besides the maiden Blanchefloure, the daughter of the German emperor Reyner, presumably rejecting her in favour of Felice.

In "Sir Launfal" the lords "lette crie a turnement" (434) in honour of Launfal:

> And whan the day was y-come . . .
> Trompours gan har hare bemes blowe.
> The lordes riden out arowe . . .
> There began the turnement
> And ech knight leyd on other good dent
> With mases and with swerdes bothe.
> Me mighte y-se some therfore
> Stedes y-wonne and some y-lore
>
> (439-449)

but, contrary to normal practice, lances were used after, not before, other weapons:

> Than mighte me se sheldes rive
> Speres tobreste and todrive
>
> (481-82)

Finally "the pris of that turnay/ Was delivered to Launfal that day" (487-88) and he celebrates with a fortnight-long feast.

Although knights sometimes won their ladies at tournaments, they frequently had to woo them, and after the popularization of the Provençal elevation of womanhood, their task was hard. In "King Horn", the earliest extant English romance,[24] it is Rymenhild, not Horn, who suffers all the misfortunes of the love-lorn supplicant, so it may be that this was the normal romance situation before the advent of the courtly love tradition. Felice explains to her apparently old-fashioned maid:

"That we ne shuld noman beseche,
But they shuld beseche women
On the fairest man*er*e that they kan,
And assaye yf they spede may
Either by nyghte or by day . . ."
(*Guy* 622-26 Caius)

Both traditions continued in English works[25] but the transference of the votary's position from woman to man may account for traits one would normally expect to be peculiar to females being attributed to very male heroes. In many romances the man weeps for his beloved (*Guy*, "Floris and Blancheflour", *Troilus*, "Orfeo", "Squire"); is sick because of his love (*Guy*, "Floris", Troilus); swoons ("Floris", "Orfeo", *Guy*, "Squire"); complains of his woe when alone (*Guy*, "Orfeo", "Squire") or with acquaintances ("Floris"); cannot rest (*Guy*); cannot eat or drink ("Floris"); constantly thinks of his lady ("Floris", *Guy*);

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[24] Probably written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century; see Sands, introduction to "King Horn", p. 15.

[25] Josian in *Beues*, Blancheflour in "Floris and Blancheflour" and Triamour in "Launfal" suffer this condition, as does the King's daughter of Hungary ("Squire"), but the latter believes her love dead. Orfeo, too, believes his wife is permanently lost to him, so that his love-longing should probably be ignored.

longs for death if he cannot achieve her ("Floris", Guy, "Orfeo"); pleads with the lady (Guy, "Squire") and obeys her whims (Guy, "Squire")--and finally achieves her.

With the lady and renown won, the family reunited or the heritage regained and evildoers punished, the romance closes on a satisfactory note. Even Guy and Beues, in which the heroes, full of years, pass on surrounded by their families who bury them with all honour, could be said to have happy endings. Frequently in the last few lines of the poem there is a return to the form of the opening with a reference to God, Christianity giving a frame to the tale as it did to the life of medieval Europe. "Havelok" closes with a brief summary and a request that the listeners should say a paternoster for the author's soul. "Gamelyn", too, is summarized before the author expresses the wish that all may achieve Heaven. The "Athelstan" poet prays that all traitors will have an evil death; the "Orfeo" poet desires that God will grant that we come out of our sorrow; while Thomas Chestre calls on Jesus and Mary to bless us. "Floris and Blancheflour", however, just ends; Beues closes with a request that God may bless us, Guy with the hope that we may go to Heaven, while "Reinbrun", the sequel to Guy, terminates with a fourteen-line moralistic ending which says that the story teaches men to do good and avoid evil, so that all may go to God in glory.

Besides structure, plot and incident, the burlesque poet utilized specific features of romance. A knight when armed carried a shield bearing his coat of arms to identify him for friend, foe and tournament judge. William Celebronde's shield ~~had~~ three gold lions on a green ground (*Lybeaus* 283-84 Cotton); Sir Lombard's was edged in white and had a gold field on which three black boars' heads were depicted (*Lybeaus* 1567-70 Cotton); Guy's triangular gold-coloured shield had a picture of one of the Three Wise Men painted in each corner (*Guy* 250:9-11 Auch); while Bevis used either a shield with a gold lion rampant (3840 M) or one with three blue eagles carrying red roses on a gold field (3784-86 A). The burlesque warriors' targes must be compared with such shields, their horses matched with those of romance steeds, their language with noble speech, and all other elements with those facets of true romance knights which have been discussed above.

The horse Guy wins in the tournament for the German emperor's daughter is "of gret bounte/ (He no schuld be 3ouen for a cuntre)" (*Guy* 825-26 Auch). To fight Barrarde, Guy is given "a swift ernend stede" (182:3 Auch). The messenger in "Athelston" rides some hundred and thirty miles (321, 356, 385) before his noble horse dies, while the Archbishop of Canterbury rides a palfrey, and Bevis' horse Arondel is "a gode palfray" (*Beues* 1608 A). Beyond such outlines there are no descriptions of noble steeds in the romances and even fewer references to plebeian mounts, for peasants have little or no part to play in such works.

The "General Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales* gives a picture of various classes and shows some of the mounts that one might expect to find carrying particular pilgrims. The Knight's "horse were goode" (74); the Monk rides a palfrey (207); the Clerk's horse is thin as a rake (287); the Shipman is on a "rouncy" which was either a hakeney or a cart-horse (390);[26] the Wife of Bath sits easily on an "amblere" (469); the Ploughman "rood upon a mere" (541), and the Reve "set upon a ful good stot" (615) which would be dapple-grey.

A good horse was as much a part of a knight's nobility as was his courage, strength, gentilesse or love. Admittedly knights fought on foot but only when dispossessed of their steeds. The feudal system was based on the knight's prowess and equipment; any strong peasant with as good equipment as a knight and as good a horse was his equal. To protect their position, nobles normally only allowed peasants mares or hacks unsuitable for speed and endurance, while knights in romances always had noble steeds.[27] Chaucer's pairing of man and mount reflects this practice and could cause one to anticipate the burlesque author's use of his audience's knowledge to increase their enjoyment of his work.

Romance language is normally elevated. The host who tells Bevis of the tournament says:

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[26] See Robinson's note, Works of Chaucer, p. 661.

[27] When Perceval, dressed only in three goat skins, rides on a bowl-like mare which is in foal, after the red knight, he discovers "Þe stede was swifter þan þe mere." See "Sir Perceval of Galles" in Middle English Metrical Romances, ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1930), line 713. Perceval at this time has not been knighted and, except for his birth, is a typical peasant--a very presumptuous one.

"Syn . . . harde you no thynge
Of the great Iustynge, that shal be
Tomorowe here in this cyte?
The dukes doughter and his eyre,
She is a mayden gode and fayre,
Hyr fader is nowe nere dede
Therfore it is gyuen hyr to rede,
A great iustynge for to crye,
And he, that may haue the maystry,
Shal thys mayden haue to wyfe
And al hyr londe wythouten stryfe!"
(*Beues* 3456-66 M)

Orfeo's steward, believing he is speaking to a heathen peasant harper, asks:

"Menstrel . . . so mot thou thrive,
Where hadestow this harp and hou?
I pray that thou me telle now"
("Orfeo" 508-10)

Orfeo's wife laments her imminent kidnapping:

"Allas, my lord, Sir Orfeo!
Sethen we first togider were,
Ones wroth neuer we nere;
Bot ever ich have y-loved thee
As my lif, and so thou me.
Ac now we mot delen atwo.
Do thy best, for I mot go!"
(96-102)

Even the knights' oaths, "be god" ("Launfal" 722), "Be Seynt Gyle" (*Lybeaus* 1060 Cotton), "Be God and be Seynt Jon" (*Lybeaus* 1688 Cotton); their taunts, "old man, no forþer þow ne gon,/ Boute þe ȝeve me bataile anon" ("Reinbrun" 54:4-5 Auch.); "Þef, turne agayn and fyȝt" (*Lybeaus* 464 Cotton), "proude felawe,/ þow were worþi ben hanged & drawe!" (*Beues* 1683-84 A); and their boasts, "Theefis, ye bee dede, withoute lesyng/. . . / All ye shull dye anone right" (*Guy* 4704-06 Caius); "Þin heved þe king schel haue anon" ("Reinbrun" 54:8 Auch.), "thyn hed here will I of smyte" (Guy 8484 Caius), lack the common touch, for example, of the speech of the characters in "The Reeve's Tale" and "The Miller's Tale".

Before the burlesque chivalric metrical romances may be examined for their treatment of the elements of style and content of typical romances, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the nature of burlesque, of its sub-categories, and of the way in which such works differ from, or possibly utilize, elements of satire and humour.

The genre of burlesque is nearly as old as literature itself, while social burlesque undoubtedly predates it. Proof of the latter is impossible, for the evidence of the burlesque died with the person imitated and those who guyed him. Some Greek literary works,[28] although entitled comedies, are burlesques of contemporary or near-contemporary stories and plays. Petronius[29] and Catullus[30] added to the genre in Roman times; some of Horace's works are rather burlesques than satires.[31] There are Middle French burlesque romances[32] antedating those in English, but both groups were probably considered simply humourous poems, as the term burlesque seems not to appear before the seventeenth century. Then it referred to drollish, merry or pleasant works, although the original Italian root word burlesco, meaning ridicule or mockery, is closer to the concept of burlesque with its implication of an imitated subject. In France, Furetière defined it as

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[28] The anonymous Battle of the Frogs and Mice is a mock heroic poem sometimes ascribed to Aristophanes, whose Peace is a burlesque play, while his Frogs, with its discussion punctuated "with a drop of oil", travesties current literary styles.

[29] See parts of the Satyricon; also J. H. Mantinband, Dictionary of Latin Literature (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 188, 216, 252-54.

[30] Coma Berenices, written in imitation of Callimachus. See Mantinband, pp. 63-64, 188.

[31] "The Bore" and "The Folly of Ambition". See Mantinband, pp. 252-53.

[32] Rutebeuf's works (such as "Song of the University of Paris"); "Land of Cockaigne"; "St. Patrick's Purgatory"; "Sir Penny". See Martha Hale Shackford, Legends and Satires from Medieval Literature (Boston: Ginn, 1913), pp. 167-174.

> Plaisant, gaillard, tirant sur le ridicule . . . on employe des mots qui se disent par pure plaisanterie et qu'on ne souffre point dans le sérieux.[33]

The ridicule of burlesque is gentle, indicating faults so that the audience may be led to an examination of self rather than being branded for correction. Fielding considered that

> The only source of the true ridiculous . . . is affectation. . . . which proceeds from . . . vanity or hypocrisy. . . . The discovery of this affectation . . . strikes the reader with surprise and pleasure. . . . Great vices are the proper objects of our detestation, smaller faults of our pity; but affectation appears to me the only true source of the ridiculous.[34]

To be fully effective, a burlesque should have its audience as its target, although others than those ridiculed may enjoy the humour of the work.

Sidney said that the

> satiric . . . sportingly never leaveth until he make a man laugh at folly, and,

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[33] Antoine Furetière, Dictionnaire Universel (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970).

[34] Henry Fielding, preface to Joseph Andrews (New York: New American Library, 1960), pp. viii-x.

> at length ashamed, to laugh at himself, which he cannot avoid without avoiding the folly.[35]

Often the satirist is so biting that his "man" is unable to laugh; if "satiric" be replaced by "burlesque author", then Sidney is more correct. Barnet _et_ _al_., distinguishing between the two similar genres, say that "burlesque" is

> An imitation of people or literature, which by distortion aims to amuse. Its subject matter is sometimes said to be faults rather than vices and its tone is neither shrill nor savage. Thus in distinction from satire it can be defined as a comic imitation of a mannerism or a minor fault either in style or subject matter contrived to arouse amusement rather than contempt and/or indignation.[36]

The form of the distortion is normally exaggeration, which

> is played off explicitly or implicitly against norms of behavior presumably shared by the audience and the author[37]

or at least norms of which the audience is aware, for although the modern reader probably has different norms from the medieval author, he may comprehend the ideal with which the poet contrasts his imitation.

Burlesque could be defined as a mild form of satire in which faults of affectation or style, not major vices, are humourously ridiculed through demonstration of the discrepancy between the original and its imitation in matter or form.

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[35] "An Apology for Poetry".

[36] S. Barnet, M. Berman and W. Burto, eds., _A Dictionary of Literary Terms_ (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960).

[37] The reference is again to the "satiric" but better fits the burlesque author. See Lee T. Lemon, _A Glossary for the Study of English_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

The burlesque is a genre in which humour and satire are combined in a good-natured mockery, through distorted imitation, of persons, manners or literature. The form of the distortion is normally exaggeration, but it could also be a discrepancy between the topic and the person, the topic and the style, or the person and the style. The burlesque does not condemn but seeks to make its audience more aware "How farre beneath the dignitie of man/ Their serious and most practised actions are."[38] It deals with the foibles of man rather than with his more serious faults and punishes only through a laughter in which even its targets may join. Burlesque differs from satire in degree of reproof, its relative mildness rendering it enjoyable for that part of the audience it is meant to correct.

Fielding considered that

> a certain drollery in style where the characters and sentiments are perfectly natural, no more constitutes the burlesque, than an empty pomp and dignity of words where everything else is mean and low can entitle any performance to the appellation of the true sublime [39]

but where the style is the target, providing the imitation is clear and grotesque, the work may be a burlesque.

There are four areas of literary burlesque, although some works seem to fit the general pattern without being either parody, travesty, mock poem or hudibrastic poem. Most works, however, fit one of these sub-categories, in many cases exhibiting features of more than one.[40]

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[38] Jonson, "Cynthia's Revels", V:i:22-23.

[39] Fielding, p. vii.

Strictly, a parody is a burlesque which imitates a particular work or a particular author's style by paying close attention to characteristic diction, form and sense, whilst substituting a less worthy or an inappropriate subject. This definition may be extended by Walke's opinion that parody is "a kind of writing in which the words of an author or his thoughts are taken and by a slight change adapted to some new purpose,"[41] while Dryden considers that parody consists of

> verses patched up from great poets and turned into another sense than their author intended. . . . the serious words of an author being perverted into a ridiculous meaning.[42]

Providing the burlesque is accepted as being mild good-natured satire, the inclusion of passages from different authors' works into a burlesque could satisfy both Walke's and Dryden's definitions of parody. Such works need not make their audience value the originals any less but merely cause the listeners or readers to appreciate the burlesque author's skill.

In travesties, noble characters are set in lower, more prosaic situations with an equivalent drop in the level

[40] "Sir Thopas" is a parody quoting from many works, but its structure is that of the genre in general rather than being based on one particular work, and it therefore may be classified as a mock poem. The poem's theme is as lofty as many of the true romances concerned with courtly love, but it is treated trivially, and thus may be regarded as a travesty.

[41] John Walke, A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary (1702; rpt. Menston: Scolar Press, 1968).

[42] "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," in John Dryden: Selected Criticism, ed. J. Kinsley and G. Parfitt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 234.

of language,[43] or a lofty theme is ridiculed by treating it in trivial terms.[44] Bond considers works of this genre restricted to a single original,[45] but they are not confined to a specific work, although they may contain lines from particular poems or prose works. The travesty, as Thrall and Hibbard state, is a work in which the "incongruity of style or treatment ridicules a subject inherently noble or dignified."[46]

The hudibrastic seems almost to fit within the form of travesty, for its matter is lowered by the manner of presentation. Jump states that "there are works which pursue broadly the same tactics as Hudibras without employing its metrical form [octosyllabic couplets] and literary style," in which the subject appears in a suitable milieu using normal diction, while through the emphasis on his vanity, foibles and manners he becomes a target for mirth.[47] Rather than the hudibrastic, such works seem to fit the mock-poem paradigm; if it does not conform to this wide genre, then the work is not a burlesque but merely a comic poem.

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[43] Dwight MacDonald, Parodies: An Anthology from Chaucer to Beerbohm (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), p. 557.

[44] Barnet, op. cit.; Lemon, op. cit.; Henri Bénac, Vocabulaire de la Dissertation (Paris: Hachette, 1949), p. 445.

[45] R. P. Bond, English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), p. 11.

[46] W. Thrall and A. Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (New York: Odyssey Press, 1936), p. 445.

[47] John D. Jump, Burlesque, Critical Idiom series (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 12-17.

The mock poem "copies the manner of a general class of poetry without specific reference to a poet or poem."[48] The most common form of mock poem is the mock-heroic, which is humourous because of the disparity between the elevated style or language used for a trivial subject or low character. "King Berdok" and "Sir Thopas" are mock romances using the matter and form of romance. "John Gilpin" is a mock ballad, and Gray's "The Shepheard's Week" is a mock pastoral. It is not the class of poem that is ridiculed in a mock poem, but the matter which is considered suitable for treatment in that style.

West considered burlesque the image of a people's life,[49] while Ian Jack in his examination of Augustan satire[50] demonstrated that the analysis of burlesque works exposed the critical and creative skills of a period, showing also the taste in literature and humour of the audience. The ensuing pages include consideration of audience taste and of the author's skill in producing didactic humourous tales from actual and literary sources and in writing end-rhyme or alliterative verses.

The poems discussed present a picture of medieval English and Scottish life. Chaucer's "Sir Thopas" and the anonymous "King Berdok" and "The Tournament of Tottenham" express their authors' critical evaluation of contemporary literature. Historical and literary chivalric elements are present in all the poems, each of which reveals some aspects of class opinion of the other "estates", while "Sir Thopas" also glances at the Flemings, and "The Tournament of Tottenham" laughs at Southern peasants.

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[48] Bond, p. 7.

[49] Albert H. West, *L'Influence Française dans la Poésie Burlesque en Angleterre entre 1660 & 1700* (Paris: Champion, 1931), p. 10.

[50] Ian Jack, *Augustan Satire: Intention and Idiom 1660-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), *passim*.

Many of the Scots works are records of probable actual events. Dunbar's "The Turnament between the Tailyour and the Sowtar", set on a Shrove Tuesday, exhibits features common to that feast; Lindesay's "Iusting betuix Iames Watsoun and Ihone Barbour" probably occurred as part of a Whitsuntide entertainment, while Scott's "The iusting and debait vp at the drum/ Betuix $W^{am}$ adamsone and johine sym" could be part of typical May Day festivities. "Of Sir Thomas Norny", like many of the Scots poems, is concerned with a particular individual.

Because the modern reader lacks the knowledge that the medieval poet could presume in his immediate audience, many allusions to the poet's time might be missed. Some background has therefore been supplied from other sources, such as historical records, analogous accounts, and themes to which the author paid particular attention in his other works. Only by examining the author's milieu may his work be seen in its proper context. In the following pages an attempt has been made to analyse the poems mentioned above, to explain possible interpretations based on knowledge of this time, in order to extend the modern reader's appreciation and to make the jokes more comprehensible and enjoyable.

# CHAPTER I

## "THE TOURNAMENT OF TOTTENHAM"

"The Tournament of Tottenham",[1] a burlesque written towards the end of the fourteenth century in Northern dialect, utilizes a nine line bob-wheel stanza and internal alliterative rhyme combined with end rhyme.

> The metre originated in a deliberate archaizing, as a protest against the effete romantic poetry. . . . French forms were not popular in the North. . . . Consequently . . . poets adopted . . . ancient verse. . . . By combining it with rime and putting it into new stanza-forms, they gave it a variety of appeal which it had not had before.[2]

"The Tournament of Tottenham" is concerned with a peasant tournament, marriage and feast, but its purpose is not necessarily limited to satirizing peasant pretensions. Burlesques *per se* are didactic; their purpose is bound to their particular audience, for there is little point in preaching to the converted--although a burlesque's humourous aspect gives it a more universal appeal.[3] "The Tournament of Tottenham" could be an attempt to lighten the peasants' burden, to discredit jousting, or to ridicule the pretensions of the peasants and the rising middle class, or a combination of these. The target and audience are interdependent; therefore, evidence showing either extends the enjoyment and appreciation beyond that which may be drawn from superficial readings.

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[1] "The Tournament of Tottenham", in Sands, *op*. *cit*. Further references will be to this text.

[2] Oscar Cargill, "Authorship of the *Secunda Pastorum*," *PMLA*, 41 (1926), 816.

[3] A good burlesque may even be taken as representative of its genre and not recognized for what it is; for example, Prokofiev's *Troika* or Chaucer's "Sir Thopas".

Although there is some doubt whether peasant tournaments occurred, there is historical evidence that royal tournaments included a pageantic element, with knights, burghers or apprentices dressed as peasants in order to ridicule peasants and their presumptuous ways. For example, there were tournaments at Stepney, where the knights and squires were masked; at Cheap, where the King was disguised as a "Saracen"; and at Windsor, where some of the knights wore vizards of red sheepskin in their disguise as "Hastiludes" or Scots.[4] The Scots, too, had pseudo-peasant tournaments, as may be seen from the Scottish Treasurer's Accounts[5] and the Pittiscottie Chronicles.[6]

Originally tournaments were merely the "turns" taken by knights running at quintains; later, at the beginning of the twelfth century, in order to make their martial practice more lifelike,

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[4] R. Withington, English Pageantry: An Historical Outline, I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), p. 90. The tournaments occurred at Stepney and Cheap (1331) and at Windsor (1348). "Hastiludes" was also the name given to those tournaments fought only with a lance (Withington, p. 93, n. 7).

[5] See below, pp. 118, 126.

[6] See below, pp. 118-119.

> Large parties . . . combated with clubs or maces, beating each other soundly without any favour or paying the least respect to rank or dignity [7]

and such activities were not restricted to the nobility, for

> Every Sunday in Lent . . . great crowds of young Londoners mounted on war horses . . . exhibited the representation of battles . . . at the same time many of the young noblemen who had not received the honour of knighthood came . . . to make trial of their skill in arms. [8]

It was from jousts such as these that the formulaic tournais developed for the nobility, and there seems no reason why tournaments should not have been continued by the peasants, nor why such tournaments should not have been the source of burlesque fights between disguised nobles. Tournaments on the Continent probably developed in the same way, producing noble rinks such as those at Hainault (1326), Paris (1330) and Valenciennes (1330), as well as those recounted in near-contemporary tales,[9] which Jones accepts as evidence of actual but generalized happenings, saying that "the Ring clearly reflects certain folk customs."[10] He draws his proof from several literary sources in Germany and Italy to show that the peasantry do have tournaments, but because they were not welcome at the burghers' tournaments he suggests the burghers might have disguised themselves as peasants to ridicule the social aspirations of the lower classes. His conclusion, that peasant participation in tournaments was only apparent, is supported by the comic fights at the royal tournaments.

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[7] Withington, p. 87, citing J. Strutt, The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England, ed. W. Hone (London: Chatto & Windus, 1898), and paraphrasing Fauchet, Origines de Chevaliers, folio 9. Strictly jousts were encounters between two champions, whilst tourneys or tournaments were clashes between groups of knights. Throughout this thesis the two terms are considered in their synonymous modern sense.

[8] Strutt, citing a twelfth century author named William Fitzstephen (Sports and Pastimes, p. 199).

[9] Events related in medieval works often cannot be accepted as true reflections of the customs of that time or place, for the author may have been treating knowledge or literature of a still earlier period, or of another country, as his own: tournaments in literature must therefore be examined for common themes rather than historicity. The disparity between the usual presentation of a theme and its treatment in burlesque works causes both laughter and a re-evaluation of the theme.

"Peasant brawls", albeit fought without horse and supposedly pageantic, would seem to be the probable basis of stories about peasant tournaments. These brawls, which took place at such times as Shrove Tuesday, May Day or the Summer Solstice, were associated with feasting, drinking and wenching. Unfortunately "these mock battles . . . sometimes degenerated into serious riots as a result of drinks and sexual competition."[11] When the peasants fought, they used "boards, sticks, hickory staves, wheelbarrow shafts, clubs, axes, pitchforks and flails";[12] these, excepting the axes and pitchforks, are the "battis and flails" of "The Tournament of Tottenham".

To appreciate the relationship of the burlesque to its sources, a knowledge of the plot is necessary; because "The Tournament of Tottenham" draws from the genre of chivalric romance as a whole and not from particular works, it is a mock poem rather than a parody or travesty. It could, however, also fall within Jump's extended definition of the hudibrastic[13] in that its characters are in a suitable milieu, using their normal diction, and becoming a target for mirth because of the author's emphasis on their vanity, foibles and manners.

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[10] George F. Jones, "The Tournaments of Tottenham and Lappenhausen," PMLA, 66 (1951), 1124.

[11] Jones, "Christis Kirk, Peblis to the Play and German Peasant Brawl," PMLA, 68 (1953), 1114.

[12] *Ibid.*, 1115-1116.

"The Tournament of Tottenham" commences with Perkyn the Potter wishing to marry Tyb, the daughter of Randal the Reve.[14] Other "bacheleris" (some married) say that they are more worthy; to this Perkyn rejoins, "I shall be alway redy in my right" (34). To settle the argument, Randal proclaims a tournament a week hence, his daughter and her dowry to be the prize. Married and single men turn out well prepared for the fight, which is to be with flails. Perkyn finally emerges as champion and, having caught and beaten Terry, who has attempted to abscond with Tyb,[15] is awarded the prize. The wives collect their husbands, Tyb and Perkyn enjoy each other for a night before being church married, and finally everybody celebrates the wedding feast.[16]

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[13] Jump, op. cit.

[14] See lines 25-27: "Which of all this bachelery/ Were best worthy/ To wed hur to his fere."

Bachelery. Webster's Dictionary defines the term as referring to all peasants, farmers, craftsmen, squires and landless or allegiance-owing knights. A passage quoted from the Bodleian Ms. supports this: "Kynge Edwarde . . . made a turnement at Dunstable to the which turnement come all the newe Bachilers of Englond and also the Chivalrie with Erles Baronns and all oþere Lordes" (English Pageantry, p. 91). Bachelors were therefore not necessarily single men.

[15] The stealing of the bride was acted out in pageantic tournaments with the bereft knight fighting the thief. One case of this occurred at the marriage of Margaret to James IV of Scotland in 1503. Poems such as "Young Lochinvar" testify to something of the sort having existed in Scottish folk tales.

The humour of "The Tournament of Tottenham" is based on the peasants' grotesque imitation of those chivalric tournaments in which the prize was marriage to the daughter of an aging ruler, for whom the victor would act as champion until he succeeded his father-in-law as king.[17] Such tournament-marriages had celebration feasts.

The history of such tournaments in literature is long. The three elements of tournai, feast and marriage may be found in Aristophanes' comedy The Peace, with which the "Tournament of Tottenham" poet may have been familiar, were he a cleric:

> SERVANT: Well sir the girl has bathed and looks divinely . . . we only want the husband . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> TRYGAEUS: . . . through the lists till dashed full on some turning post they reel and fall . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> What lots are coming to the wedding supper . . .[18]

It is rather a bawdy play and is itself a burlesque inveighing against the burghers and the rulers of that time who forced the peasants to fight.

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[16] Doubt has been thrown upon the standard of the feast; it could be a social comment upon the poverty of the peasants. See below, p. 47.

[17] By the sixteenth century the practice was one of form rather than fact; the succession might not take place. For example, see the marriage of Margaret of England to James IV of Scotland (1503) and the death of Henry II of France in a tournament at the wedding of his daughter in 1559. For earlier examples see below, pp. 38-39.

[18] The Comedies of Aristophanes, ed. B. B. Rogers (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1913), pp. 109, 115, 151.

The Nibelungenlied[19] has a form of the chivalric triad; before Gunther can make Brunhild his wife, he must "essay [her[20]]sports . . . and [prove] himself the winner" (p. 65). With Siegfried's invisible help, Gunther wins, and they then go to Brunhild's palace where they are "shown all the greater courtesy" (p. 67). Another example of the three elements occurs when Brunhild arrives at Wurmes, where

> they rode many a glorious joust . . . Lord Siegfried rode through the melee . . . many times. . . . It soon became apparent who were brave warriors. . . . Many benches had been set . . . and there was no lack of what was wanted. . . . The noble king of the Netherlands [Siegfried] accepted her [Kriemhild] as his wife. [21]

With this form of chivalry the poet may have been familiar, as the Nibelungenlied story was popular, being partly parallel to Arthurian legends.[22] He would, however, be more likely to burlesque French or Southern tales were he antagonistic to them,[23] or other English tales of which his audience was aware. As "The Tournament of Tottenham" was written not before 1345 and not after 1400,[24] his sources would have been common, at least orally, before the latter date.

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[19] The Nibelungenlied, trans. A. T. Hatto (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966). All citations are to this text.

[20] Brunhild is her own champion.

[21] See pages 84-86. Siegfried had already been promised Kriemhild, but without her knowledge. This "promising" with the joust, just as a form, was common to many later chivalric tales.

[22] The Nibelung poet is believed to have been influenced by Chrétien de Troyes, who was at least an indirect influence on Malory.

[23] See below, pp. 39-41.

*Beues of Hamtoun* reflects the main chivalric virtues typified later in Malory's works.[25] Mercy is given, the weak are assisted, ladies are succoured, and loyalty and honour are esteemed. Bevis, although married, jousts for and wins the hand and dowry of the daughter of the king of Aumbeforce. She consents to have him just as her protector:

> Þow schelt al þis seuen ȝere
> Be me lord in clene manere
> And ȝif þe wif comeþ þe aȝen
> Terry, þe swein, me lord schel ben!
> (3835-38 A)

During this tournament Terry has not fought against Bevis,

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[24] "The Tournament of Tottenham", if written by the Wakefield Master or an imitator, would have to have been written around the time of the Towneley Plays. Critical opinion as to the dating of the plays may be summarized as follows:

| Pre 1400 | | Circa 1400 | After 1400 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| T. Raine | 1388 | A. Hohlfield | J. Foster | 1400-1410 |
| C. Gayley | 1371-1392 | | French & Hale | 1400-1440 |
| E. Hemingway | 1371-1392 | | | |
| MacKintosh | 1349-1400 | | Sands | 1400-1440 |
| Cargill | 1349-1400 | | Frampton | 1420-1450 |

See M. G. Frampton, "The Date of the Wakefield Master," *PMLA*, 50 (1935), 631, n. 3. The reference to "Sothren tothe" and to presumptuous underlings in the "First Shepherds' Play" and the "Second Shepherds' Play" would have been most pertinent immediately after Richard II's sojourn in York between midsummer and Christmas of 1392. It is therefore possible that "The Tournament of Tottenham" predates "Sir Thopas".

[25] At every Pentecost, Arthur's knights had to renew their vows: to avoid committing outrage, murder, treason or rape, to be merciful to those who requested it, to help distressed ladies, to take only the just side of a quarrel, whether for love or other reward. The penalty for transgressions was banishment or death, besides the concomitant loss of "worship". See *The Works of Thomas Malory*, ed. E. Vinaver (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 91.

and at no time is he treacherous, unlike the Terry in "The Tournament of Tottenham". As Terry in Beues ultimately marries the lady, the "Tournament of Tottenham" poet could have been recalling this fact in having Terry lead off Tyb. In his characterization of Terry, the author of "The Tournament of Tottenham" could be ridiculing the habitual virtue of the counterpart in Beues.

Alternatively, the poet may be recalling Sir Tyrry in Guy of Warwick, who abducts Oisel, Duke Oton's betrothed. Tyrry and his sweetheart are repeatedly recaptured, but finally, with Guy's help, the two true lovers are married. As Terry (in "The Tournament of Tottenham") is overcome, not having a true noble knight to assist him, and as Perkyn wins Tyb, the poet could be implying that Perkyn was neither the best bachelor nor Tyb's true love.

In the story of "Sir Eglamoure of Artoys" there is a poor knight who aspires to the hand of Christabel, his lord's daughter, as Perkyn aspires to Tyb's. After having been victorious in several tournais and having completed two trials,

> "Damy celle" he sayde "so have y spede,
> With the grace of God y shalle the wedd"
> Therto ther trowthys they plyght
> . . . .
> That there they dwellyd alle nyȝt[26]

Their union is without benefit of Holy Mother Church, the result being a son. Much later Sir Eglamoure, like Bevis, enters and wins a tournament merely to gain renown. Upon recognizing Christabel, the prize, he marries her and

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[26] "The Romance of Sir Eglamoure of Artoys," in The Thornton Romances (London: Camden Society, 1844), lines 76-81.

> To holde brydale they hente
> Hyt lastyd a fourtenyght
> (1331-32)

The triad is also found in "The Knight of the Swan" (where the festivities last fifteen days), in "Valentine and Orson" (where a noticeable period of time passes between the wedding and the consummation) and in "Melusine". Unlike that of the "Tournament of Tottenham", the jousting in "Melusine" follows the marriage and feast in one case and merely passes the time between the espousal and the supper in another. A champion is not required, so that the tournaments are only formalities.

Sir Jean Froissart in his Chronicles records several historical instances of marriage, feast and tournament. In 1327 Edward III married Philippa of Hainault; at her coronation there were feastings, tournaments and other sumptuous entertainments every day for about three weeks.[27] King Charles of France married Isabella of Bavaria in 1385 and subsequently held a feast which, with various entertainments, lasted for a week; as his army was fighting against the Flemish burghers, he dispensed with a tournament (Fr p. 278). When John of Gaunt's daughter Philippa was married to Don John, King of Portugal (1387), "there were great and solemn feastings" followed by tilts and tournaments (Fr p. 372), while at the Duc de Berry's marriage to Jane of Boulogne in

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[27] Jean Froissart, The Chronicles of England, France and Spain, trans. Thomas Johnes, ed. H. P. Dunster (New York: Dutton, 1961), p. 15. Further references shall be cited in the text.

1387 the feasts and tournaments lasted four days (Fr p. 459) Richard II's marriage in 1396 was marked by feasts (Fr p. 559) with a tournament some weeks after, which Froissart tells us was published "beyond sea and as far as Scotland" (p. 560).

Chaucer burlesques romances such as those mentioned above in "Sir Thopas", to the irritation of the middle-class Host who stops the tale. The reason for the briefness of "Sir Thopas" will be discussed later, but it would appear that people of Chaucer's class would appreciate "The Tournament of Tottenham" more than would those of Harry Bailly's rank. Harry's class at first would probably not even be aware that burghers' pretensions were as much under attack as those of the rural peasants of London's environs. When they did realize that they too were targets, they would be shamed and angered and, possibly, moved to eschew tournaments in order to avoid further ridicule.[28]

How would the lower classes view "The Tournament of Tottenham"? In "The Second Shepherds' Play"[29] one opinion of those who pretend to be what they are not is given in a comment which demonstrates how Northerners felt about Southerners, when the First Shepherd says:

> Bot, Mak, is that sothe?
> Now take outt that sothren tothe,
> and sett in a torde!
> (214-216)

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[28] The "Tournament of Tottenham" poet would be like Sidney's satiric; see above, pp. 21-22.

[29] Citations from "The First Shepherds' Play" and "The Second Shepherds' Play" are to The Towneley Plays, ed. G. England (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

It is not unlikely that the author of "The Tournament of Tottenham" shared this feeling and decided to guy the Londoners to show that they were not as high and mighty as they considered themselves. In "The First Shepherds' Play" the second Shepherd begs:

> Both bosters and bragers/ god kepe vs fro,
> That with thare long dagers/ dos mekyll wo:
> From all byll hagers/ with colknyfys that go;
> Sich wryers and wragers/ gose to and fro
> ffor to crak
> (55-59)

which passage seems to show that strange weapons, billhooks and cabbage knives, were used by underlings copying the great: "Nor wheder is gretter,/ The lad or the master,/ So stowtly he strydys" (70-72). The shepherds in this play obviously do not like those who are great in their own esteem; yet they, in their feast, are not above imitating the upper classes themselves. "Sir Thopas" and these two plays present conflicting evidence concerning the audience for "The Tournament of Tottenham". "The Tournament" could have been written to amuse any class at the expense of either or both of the others, or simply for Northerners to laugh at Southerners.

Cargill also discovers similarities between "The Second Shepherds' Play" and "The Tournament of Tottenham".[30] He argues that they must have been written by the same author. He also considers that all the comic sections of the Towneley cycle, because of their similarity of style and the change of style where they commence, must have been interpolations by the Wakefield Master. He further states that "The

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[30] Cargill, 830 *ff*.

Tournament of Tottenham" was originally "The Tournament of Tottington" (a town in Lancashire). However, were the poem purely Northern, there would be no further references to the London area; line 13, "of Hyssyltown, of hygate and of Hakenay", renders his reading unacceptable. The styles of the "Tournament of Tottenham" poet and the Wakefield Master are similar, but the Northern prejudice against Southerners, as suggested earlier, may have been sufficient to set the temper of the works, so that whether they were by the same author is doubtful. Cargill admits that "a close imitator" of the Wakefield Master might have existed, for the "Tale of the Lady Prioress and Her Three Suitors . . . is obviously related to the Tale of the Basyn,"[31] the sole sharers of the nine line bob-wheel stanza otherwise unique to "The Tournament of Tottenham" and the works of the Wakefield Master.

Throughout England the custom of vicariously "getting one's own back" on the overlord was common. In the Ashton area it went by the title of "Riding the Black Lad,"[32] the Black Lad being Sir Ralph de Assheton (circa 1375), who followed such practices as rolling people downhill in a barrel in which spikes had been hammered and hanging them in cages, in addition to the usual tortures employed to keep subjects subjugated. At the Easter fair he would be jousted at in effigy, pilloried in effigy, hung, drawn and quartered, with as many other indignities as could be managed. The custom survived in the town for several hundred years; now there is a pageant.

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[31] Cargill, 819.

[32] Withington, in English Pageantry, II (1920), p. 19, says "A Black Boy", and equates it with other Easter practices in other areas, not realising the full import. Further information may be culled from W. Bowman's England in Ashton-under-Lyne, articles in "The Reporter Group" of newspapers by John Cassidy, and local legends.

"The Tournament of Tottenham" could have served this purpose of symbolic revenge also, with the annoyance felt by the Lords at being aped being more intense than any they might feel at being abused in effigy. As Jones states, "The nobles looked down with kindly condescension when . . . peasants danced their native dances, but with bitter resentment when they tried to imitate the foreign ways of their social betters."[33] Representation of peasant tournaments indicting the nobility in general would thus be more of a lash than would a peasant brawl, especially since no one could really take measures against the participants for their disrespect.[34] For a cleric who supported the Church's opposition to tournaments, peasant laughter would be a valuable weapon in deterring nobles from taking part in formal jousts.[35]

Much of the humour of a burlesque is produced through the apparent disparity between the supposed ideal and its imitation. True knights rode noble horses except when they wished to exhibit their humility or were forced to other, meaner beasts by circumstance; for example, Arthur, having been defeated by Launcelot in the Great Tournament, "toke a lytyll hakenay and rode after sir Lancelot,"[36] while elsewhere Sir Perceval, who had his horse stolen, borrowed a yeoman's "hakenay" to catch the thief and recover his steed (Malory p. 789). Percival was nearly as loath to ride the yeoman's ignoble animal as Launcelot was to travel in a cart, yet it was animals like that which Perceval borrowed that the peasants considered fit for tournament mounts. There was no difference between the class of animals and that of the peasant jousters to provide a humourous contrast, but there was a discrepancy between the mares and the part they were to play, a disparity that was utilised in the depiction of peasant tournaments by all burlesque chivalric romance poets to point up the presumption of the peasants in arrogating jousting to their estate.

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[33] Jones, "Tournaments of Tottenham & Lappenhausen," 1127.

[34] In stories put out in Germany, one disguised knight routed all the peasants at one of their tournaments. See Jones, "Tournaments of Tottenham & Lappenhausen."

[35] Immense impetus was probably given to the Church's attempt to stop jousting by the incident at Dartford in 1330 where Edward III was nearly killed.

"The Tournament of Tottenham" says, "He that had no gode hors,/ He gat him a mare" (71-72), implying that all were on mares, for no peasant was allowed a war horse; to further emphasise their low class, one of the mounts "lete a faucon-fare/ At the rereward" (89-90). The fight was fiercely waged at first "til ther horses swet" (157), but then "The boyes were so wery for-fught/ That they might not fight mare aloft"[37]; not only have the men no endurance, but the horses also give up: "The capull were so wery that they might not ga,/ But still gon they stand" (184-185).

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[36] Malory, *Works*, p. 663.

[37] A horrible pun using the Scottish dialect *mare* for *more* in addition to its obvious English meaning.

One of the horses, that of Dudman, seems to be much praised. When Terry has said he intends to steal away with Tyb, Dudman replies:

> "I vow to God . . . and swor be the stra,
> Whils me is left my mere, thou getis hur not swa!"

and then one is left wondering about whom he is talking, Tyb or his horse.[38] "For sho is wele shapen and light as the ro" (129) could apply to either. "Thar is no capul in this mile befor hur shall ga!" (130) applies to his horse's being the swiftest there, but could it not also mean that Tyb will ride at the front of any group they might have? "She will me noght begile" (131) seems to apply to a woman's rather than to a horse's trickery. The next two lines, "She will me bere, I dar wele say,/ On a lang someris day," could well refer to either and could be tied in with other allusions to Tyb. The next line seems to confirm that the verses are about the horse --"Fro Hyssyltoun to Hakenay"--but the last line, "Noght other half mile," could imply that Tyb and he would rest in the same place, or that his horse could only travel half a mile in one day. Terry's boast could be one declaiming his own sexual ability: Saw thou never yong boy forth his body bede/ . . . / I am armed at the full" (119, 122), while his "armis", besides showing unchivalric objects which emphasize his lack of breeding, extend the bawdy ambiguity to show Tyb's popular availability for a ride: "A sadill withouten a panel/ With a fles of woll" (125-126). Similarly, Hawkyn boasts,

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[38] Capul, horse and similar words in "The Tournament of Tottenham", excepting for the "gode hors", are applicable also to women. This reading is supported by Shakespeare's use of it in Henry V, II, vi: "You talk of horse and armour . . . only in patient stillness while his rider mounts him . . . for my horse is my mistress.-- Your mistress bears well.-- Me well; which is the prescript phrase and perfection of a good and particular mistress." (Tyb is not so particular, apparently.)

Percy's emendation of his text to circumvent this bawdy reading has only served to make it more prominent; see below, pp. 45-46.

> "When I begin to play [with Tyb?]
> I make a vow that I ne shall
> But-if Tybbe will me call [have had enough]
> Or I be thries down fall, [climaxed]
> Right onis com away"
> (113-117)

It would seem that just as the champions and mounts of romance are at variance with those of "The Tournament of Tottenham", so too are the noble ladies different from Tyb. Oisel and Josian remained chaste until married, Christabel was faithful to Eglamoure, but there was little doubt as to Tyb's virginity. Knowledge of her "friendliness"--that the girdle of chastity was only borrowed--could have caused the heartfelt cry of Randal, "But at hur most worship I wold sho were married" (40).

The ambiguity would not have arisen were it not for Bishop Percy's modifying his text and various editors following his reading. In apparent agreement with Percy, Jones notes:

> The Harleian Ms. says "Whyls me is left me, merth, thou gets hurr not swa" . . . the Cambridge Ms. . . . "Whil I am most mery thu gets hir not swa". This would mean that the heroine Tyb carried Dubman [sic] from Hyssylton to Hakenay on a long summer day. Bishop Percy noted the discrepancy and emended the text

> to read, "Whyls me ys left my mare
> . . ."[39]

Possibly Percy, comprehending the bawdy reading, bowdlerized his text to give an alternative. Both Harleian and Cambridge versions could be interpreted as "While I remain fit [hale and hearty] . . ." or, because the northwestern dialect meaning of "while" is "until", the line could mean "until I am incapable . . ." with the Cambridge manuscript carrying the further inference of Dudman intending to prevent Terry from absconding with Tyb until he [Dudman] was most drunk. Percy, besides minor emendations to tenses, also changed "harnise" to "hornes" (146), "The chiefe" to "cheverone" (151), "And they ifere assent" to "And they to church went" (212). Sands restores the latter reading to "And they in fere assent." "Harness" makes more sense in line 146, for the idea of horns is repeated by "trumpets", while "chief" (151) may mean that Perkyn's banner was that of a "plowmell". Percy's clerical nature may be seen in his sending Tyb and Perkyn to church; the implication that they went to church is in any event carried by "dere Tyb has he wed" (214).

In all the marital tournaments the "gre" was often a lady's hand, with the rest of the prize the prospect of ruling a country or town. Randal, being a Reve, would be in charge of another's property and, although he might be powerful among the peasants, his power would end with his life. He offers Tyb a broody hen, a dun cow, a gray mare and a spotted sow. These would be riches indeed to a peasant, particularly at a time when disease had killed many animals and there had been poor harvests; but they hardly stand comparison with the hawk or falcon, white steed and greyhounds awarded at many noble tournaments. A bonus is later thrown in, for Tyb is "on a sek full of seedis, for sho shuld sit soft" (76). This coarse tongue-twister provides a further contrast between Tyb and the noble ladies, besides the obviously ridiculous spectacle of anyone sitting "soft" on a sack of seeds.

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[39] Jones, "Tournaments of Tottenham & Lappenhausen," 1135.

Randal, when announcing the dowry to be awarded with Tyb, says "no spens will I spare" (51) and the poem later attests, "No catel was there spared," supporting the veracity of "At that fest they were servid with a riche array" (226). The next line, however, "Every fif and fif had a cokenay," could undercut it, if "cokenay" means "cock's egg" or "bad egg": "a sense that would at least fit the tone of the poem."[40] The reading of "cokenay" as "cook's knafe", however, in the light of the German Kermesses, Scots analogues, and reports of even simple weddings, seems more probable, although the former reading shows a greater disparity between accounts of chivalric feasts and those of the peasants. Were the poem written at the time of the "Second Shepherds' Play", the account of the poor feast could be a reflection of the peasants' poverty at that time.[41]

There are other references to wealth, a wealth which

[40] Sands, p. 321, line 227n.

[41] See "The Second Shepherds' Play", passim.

the peasants were unlikely to have; the "gadelings" say, "And we er richer men then he and more good haves/ Of catel and corn" (31-32); during the battle Perkyn cries, "A hors for forty pens" (174),[42] while Tyb at the beginning of the tournament has "a broche on hur brest full of safer stonis" (84). Ironically in the light of Tyb's character, those who wore the sapphire "must be chaste";[43] those who wore it chastely were supposedly protected against offences of envy or treachery,[44] yet Tyb is treacherously led off by Terry; while the stone supposedly helped its wearer to get along with neighbours,[45] dear Tyb is the cause of the fighting.

The incongruity of the picture presented by the "bacheleris" compared with that of the chivalric knight would undoubtedly have amused the people of that time. The heroes wear bowls on their heads, mats about their bodies which are covered by sheepskins sewed so that their "armour" will not burst, and they carry wicker baskets[46] as shields, some bearing armorial designs, all of which are to do with country matters.[47] These pennons are on a level with, or even inferior to, those of Dunbar's Tailor and Cobbler:

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[42] Shades of Shakespeare--Richard III, IV:iv: "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!"

[43] Shackford, Legends and Satires, p. 112.

[44] Lapidaire du Roi Philippe, in Leon Baisier, The Lapidaire Chretien: Its Composition, Its Influences, Its Sources (1936; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 115.

[45] Baisier, p. 84.

[46] "Harrow" (66) is understood to be the same as "sheldis" (160), "fannes" (164) and "harwes" (203). Sands footnotes "fannes" (text) as being "a wicker shield used in mock combat" (p. 320); in line 66 we are told "A harrow brod as a fanne." In The Peace and The Birds, Aristophanes' general is a manufacturer of winnowing baskets. Jones in "Tournaments of Tottenham & Lappenhausen" suggests that "fan" denotes a winnowing basket.

> Of an old roten fell;
> The cheverone, of a plowmell
> And the shadow of a bell
> Poudred with mone-light
> (150-154)

The poem opens with a typical romance catalogue of heroes but, instead of the champions being Bevis, Guy, Launcelot or similarly renowned knights, they are the homely Hawkin, Herry, Tomkin, Terry: the country bumpkins who joust in the tournament at Tottenham. Once the initial jousts are ended, the tournament turns into a brawl, not a chivalric encounter on foot. Perkyn, whose horse is lost, "stirt up as a snaile" (177) instead of "sparkle out of brand"; he catches hold of a horse's tail and requisitions Dudman's flail before going on to acquire five horses. He then wrestles with the other champions, throwing them to the ground where he strikes them with his flail before running after Terry's steed (which is definitely not "swift ernande"), catching it, pulling Terry to the ground and flailing him. Night finally ends the tournament.

The speech of the peasants who are supposedly acting as knights is another area of disparity between the real and the supposed ideal. Taking Malory's work as the ideal, elevated language is used by the knights even in comic incidents. Sir Launcelot, having been shot in the buttocks, says, "Lady or damesell whatsomever ye be, in an evyll tyme bare ye thys bowe. The devyll made you a shoter!" (Malory p. 784); whereas

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[47] "Min armes are so clere/ I bere a reddil and a rake/ Poudred with a brennend drake/ And three cantel of a cake/ In icha cornare/ . . . / In min armis I bere wele/ A dough trough and a pele/ A sadill withouten a panel/ With a fles of woll" (104-108; 123-126).

"Allas," quod Hudde, "my joye I lese!
Me had lever then a ston of chese"
(TT 186-187)

is an example of the language of the "Tournament of Tottenham": beautiful imagery, although hardly of a courtly nature. Before the tournament the "trewe drinkers" assume elevated diction in conscious imitation of their betters. Only two words they use, "raves" and "carping", might not be employed by more noble characters. The rhythm of the lines, along with the obvious imitation of another class, provides the humour.

The initial description of the festivities by the highway jangles along quite happily, exhibiting reasonable alliteration. When Perkyn addresses Randal, the pace slows with the short line "Tyb the dere" (23), after which he, like Mak in "The Second Shepherds' Play", adopts a "sothren tothe" or at least attempts to speak "posh". The company's reaction to his request concerning who would make the best husband for Tyb shows a return to alliterative verse. Perkyn's response,

"To Tybbe I have hight,
That I shall be alway redy in my right,
If that it shuld be this day sevenight,
Or ellis yet to-morn"
(33-36)

has a more stately rhythm, suitable for a noble speech. The final short line, however, slows down the stanza even more and, with the time-sequence inversion of the last two lines, bathetically lowers Perkyn's constant readiness to defend his "right" to Tyb. Similarly, Randal's attempt to extend Perkyn's joke by assuming upper-class language is undercut by the two two-foot lines "And my donnid cowe . . ./ And my spottid sowe". He is unable to carry his imitation after the first short line, and although the sentiments are elevated, the contents framed by the two short lines--

> For no spens will I spare
> For no catel will I care.
> He shall have my grey mare
> (52-54)

show a return to standard diction and, in the "grey mare", a further lowering of the sense of his wealth.

Another way in which the Tottenham "bacheleris" are at variance with the romantic ones is in their boasts. Those of Hud, Hawkyn and Terry, if taken in a non-bawdy way, show overweening pride, as do those of Perkyn. His promise to capture five horses some critics regard as most unseemly, although in Beues of Hamtoun Terry "leide on, alse he wolde awede/ And wan his lord mani gode stede" (3823-24 A), and even Malory sees nothing wrong in capturing a horse from one's peer, as is evidenced in "Merlin" (Malory pp. 22-23). Those who captured horses, however, did not anticipate their success by proud boasts.

The oaths sworn by the men of "The Tournament of Tottenham" do not have the range of those of romance. "I vow to God" opens four stanzas--without, however, gaining the humourous effect of incremental repetition. "Swore by his creed" and "swore be the straw" are also used. The vows are undercut by comments such as "if I have the gout" (109) and "thou spekis of cold rost!" (136).

Once the fighting begins there were "fewe wordis spoken" (158). Those that were, further demonstrate the discrepancy between the champions of Tottenham and those of romance, for true knights would not say

> "Help, Hud! I am ded in this ilk route!"
> (173)

although they might pray God would help them to "lightly come of [their] noye out" (175). Tyb's sole speech, which occurs as Perkyn betters Terry--

> "We, te-he! . . .
> Ye er a dughty man"
> (197-198)

further emphasizes how far she is from being a noble lady, for although they might laugh at a knight's prowess, their comments would be like Elene's when Gyngelyne defeats three challengers:

> "Þys yonge kny3t
> Ys chose for champyon!"
> (Lybeaus 488-89 Cotton)

Tyb has the last word in the tournament, for after Perkyn rescues her and the tournament ends, the poet describes the retirement of the champions and the subsequent feast without using dialogue.

The "Tournament of Tottenham" poet was a careful versifier in end-rhyme, maintaining a strict aaab cccb scheme for twenty-five of the twenty-six stanzas, only twice repeating the same word in a single stanza--"brest" used to mean "burst" (64) and "breast" (66), and "nonis" to mean "occasion" in lines 82 and 84--to provide the rhyme. In stanza 19, instead of the usual form, he has aaab cdeec in the verse with the greatest alliterative emphasis in the long lines. He disregards the number of syllables to a line, normally attempting four stresses to a line; they are not obtrusive, some lines being in pentameter while others are anapestic. Strictly, at least three of the four accented syllables should alliterate,[48] but frequently in "The Tournament of Tottenham" they do not, the poet in some instances having no alliteration (30, 65, 91, 136); in many cases only in two words (22, 28, 40, 227);[49] or having two words alliterate in the first half line and two commencing with a different sound alliterate in the second half of the line (10, 46, 111). Other lines the poet overloads with possible alliterating words (1, 2, 13, 20, 35, 57, 58) and it is difficult to determine which syllables are supposed to be stressed. Because the poet is so able in end rhyme, and because he shows that he is able to write alliterative verse in some stanzas, the reader has to conclude that the "Tournament of Tottenham" poet is burlesquing those

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[48] G. K. Anderson, in his Old and Middle English Literature from the Beginnings to 1485 (New York: Collier, 1962), says alliteration is found under the main stresses. The third of the four stressed syllables, that is, the first stressed syllable in the second half line, establishes the alliterative design. The third stressed syllable alliterates with the first; sometimes also with the second; rarely, if ever, with the fourth. The stresses will fall upon the important words in the line, upon nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns.

[49] Many short lines have two alliterating words and seem more separated half lines than individual lines.

"second rate or worse"[50] works produced in the alliterative revival.

People of any estate would appreciate "The Tournament of Tottenham" on at least one level and might be capable of enjoying it on several. It has two possible didactic thrusts: one is a request that people should observe their place in society, whilst the other is a plea for the cessation of tournaments and, by extension, of warfare. In the first instance, the rising middle class might recognise the warning that over-emulation of the upper class would make them appear foolish, while, with the nobles, they could appreciate the amusing metrical tale that derides the peasants. The nobles, besides noting the peasant presumption, might extend their consideration and their mirth to include the pretensions of the burghers. The peasants might enjoy the opportunity to laugh at themselves or their superiors, releasing peacefully some of the antagonism they felt against their masters. The Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Viking audience would probably like the ridicule heaped on Anglo-Norman customs and poetry and would probably be amused by the burlesque of poor alliterative verse. Northerners would be entertained by the disparagement of Southerners, while nearly everybody, including clerics, would relish the bawdy ambiguities and occasional coarse incidents. It is the humour rather than the didacticism of "The Tournament of Tottenham" that most impresses itself on the audience;

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[50] Dorothy Everett, "The Alliterative Revival," Essays on Middle English Literature, ed. P. Kean (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 46.

it is the amusement arising from foibles ridiculed, rather than from the correction thereof, that gives the work its continued appeal.

# CHAPTER II

## "SIR THOPAS"

"Sir Thopas" was probably intended for oral delivery.[1] The minstrel insertions and introductions may not be cited as evidence of this intent, for they are a feature of the romances that Chaucer was burlesquing. It is the bathetic lines like "As it was Goddes grace" (1913),[2] "He hadde a semely nose" (1919), and "Ye, bothe bukke and hare" (1946) that give the reader a sensation of the author/performer making an aside to his audience: a sense of a meaning look following a pause, which would increase the humour of the poem. The modern reader must regret that Chaucer did not leave stage directions for dramatic readings of "Sir Thopas", probably the best mock romance ever written.

The poem opens with a typical minstrel's call to attention: "Listeth, lordes, in good entent" (1902), an appeal repeated some hundred and twenty lines later as "Yet listeth, lordes, to my tale"(2023) and somewhat angrily, as the lords' attention had apparently again wandered fifty-eight lines later, with

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[1] Ruth Crosby, in "Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery," Speculum, 13 (1938), 413 ff., says Chaucer is writing for his hearing audience. C. M. Hathaway, in "Chaucer's Verse Tags as a Part of his Narrative Machinery," JEGP, 5 (1963-65), 483, suggests Chaucer keeps the reader "in the position of people listening to (not reading) a story."

[2] All citations from "Sir Thopas" are to Works, ed. Robinson.

> Now holde youre mouth, *par charitee*,
> Bothe knyght and lady free,
> And herkneth to my spelle
> (2081-83)

By thus showing his tale unable to hold the attention of its imaginary original pre-Canterbury-Pilgrimage audience, Chaucer is preparing his listeners for Harry's lack of interest and, because of the briefness of "Sir Thopas", its inability to "despendest tyme" (2121), to appreciate the fault of prolixity in other romances, not excluding his own "Squire's Tale". The second line of the poem avers the truth of what the audience is to hear: "And I wol telle verrayment" (1903), an averral which is repeated twice more as "For sothe, as I yow telle may" (1939) and "it is no nay" (1956). With the fourth line the subject of the tale is introduced: a knight "fair and gent/ In bataille and in tourneyment,/ . . . sire Thopas" (1905-07). All in all, a typical introduction of a romance hero.

The form continues in the next verses, his parentage, birthplace, appearance, abilities and desirability being presented; his paternity is, however, doubtful, his appearance seems somewhat effeminate and middle class, his abilities are those of a yeoman rather than a knight, and his allure is a reversal of the usual courtly love tradition. True romances show some of these elements just as Chaucer presents them, and it may be because of this exact depiction that some (e. g., Spenser) have regarded "Sir Thopas" as a member of the genre and not as a mock poem.[3]

Chaucer's use of the form of romance continues in Thopas' experiencing an adventure, his meeting with the giant Olifaunt while seeking an ideal unknown lady as his beloved, his successful return home, and his second outriding to do battle with the giant. In these sections Chaucer includes the formularized arming of the hero as well as various catalogues which are to be found in modified forms in many romances; both are undercut, either through repetitious proximate terms or superfluous details.[4] The poem's settings ("fair forest", town and noble hall) and the knight's constant "pryking" whether while hunting, in love-longing or in flight[5] are typical of romances and, with the standard minstrel tags,[6] are in appropriate places, and all contribute to the sense of the romances that Chaucer is striving to achieve, while the tags at the same time aid in the bathetic lowering of what they follow.

The first example of bathos in "Sir Thopas" comes in the second stanza where Thopas' birthplace in "fer contree" turns out to be Flanders, a mere twenty-odd miles away. The fact that his "fader" is "ful free" diminishes the respect that might be felt for the son of a lord, and it is the sense of a yeoman knight that stays with the reader and that is reinforced in subsequent stanzas. Sir Thopas is an obvious contrast to the Knight of the *Canterbury Tales*, for he is white, not sunburned, and his apparel drawn from far and wide is more for show than use. His abilities seem noble enough, but the goshawk with which he hunts is the yeoman's bird, and although knights might use bow and arrows for hunting, they would not wrestle, nor normally would they be sought after as "paramour".[7]

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[3] A. A. Jack, A Commentary on the Poetry of Chaucer and Spenser (1920; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 108.

[4] For example, nutmeg may be put in ale or left in the box (1953-55), and "sugar that is trye" (2046) rounds off the catalogue of "roial spicerye" (2043). Chaucer's contemporary audience would know an haubergeoun was worn to prevent piercing of hearts and that hawberks were "of plate". Seven layers of body armour are itemized in twelve lines.

[5] Noticeably he does not "prick" when going to meet Olifaunt the second time.

[6] Chaucer uses tags such as "As it was Goddes grace" (1913), "By dale and eek by downe" (1986), "Bityde what bityde" (2064), "As sparcle out of the bronde" (2095), "God shilde his corse fro shonde" (2098) and "So worthy under wede" (2107).

Thopas' first expedition, as far as content, is true to the average romance, although the extensive use of bathos renders it funny.[8] The catalogues of herbs, too, seem reasonable, although anyone knowing the various bird songs has to find that catalogue amusing, for by no stretch of the imagination could the sparrow-hawk, jay and pigeon be a joy to hear.

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[7] See above, p. 6.

[8] For the modern reader the thought of deer and hares being "wilde best" is amusing and the emphasis Chaucer places on it with the pauses and the "ye" implies that he intended his contemporary audience to be amused too; that he was not using *wild* in the then technical sense, which meant a beast to hunt, but in the sense which was just becoming current, of cruel and ferocious. S. Tucker, in "Sir Thopas and the Wild Beasts," *RES* (New Series), 10 (1959), 55, considers that there was "nothing derogatory in Sir Thopas' pursuit of the hare " because the *Boke of St. Albans* says the hare is the second beast of venery, that it is courageous and strong; however, "He priketh thurgh a fair forest/ Therinne is many a wilde best,/ Ye, both bukke and hare" (1944-46) parallels "For in that contree was ther noon/ That to him durste ride or goon/ Neither wyf ne childe" (1994-96), and although *childe* can mean *knight*, here it undoubtedly means *young people*, so that these lines, by their omission, show the effect he had on men: they did not fear him, for he was a coward.

The bathetic lowering is normally found in the third or sixth verse, or in the verses of one foot; see below, pp. 107-108.

Thopas' sudden falling in love-longing is not really explained by his dream of an elf-queen, for he would surely have been seeking the country of faery from the start and not have gone hunting, had he dreamt of her the previous night. Chaucer imitates the lack of logical progression from adventure to adventure and the inadequate transition or apparent motivation that is found in some romances, for the delectation of his audience. Thopas' stated intention of finding his paramour ends with an ambiguity, for "By dale and eek by downe" (1986), coming at the end of his statement, occupies the position frequently used for an oath; therefore the reader is forced to consider whether Chaucer intends the line to imply that Thopas will travel unceasingly across hill and valley until he meets his beloved, or if he is swearing by dale and down as he later swears "on ale and breed" (2062).

The otherwise typical romance encounter with the giant depicts Thopas as a coward because he does not fight with Olifaunt,[9] although it is possible that Thopas may have made an attack with his Spanish-Moorish throwing spear. He hopes that Olifaunt will sorrowfully await their second encounter because of the weapon: "with this launcegay/ Abyen it ful sowre" (2011-12);[10] he boasts of his intention to kill the giant and then draws "abak ful faste" (2017). It does not seem unlikely that after the boast came an action, Thopas' attempt to "percen" Olifaunt's "mawe" before Thopas made his strategic withdrawal. The throwing spear would ~~even~~ be suitable for attacking a giant, while the cowardice remains, for Thopas should have immediately continued the fight with his sword. Chaucer leaves both possibilities open; if the spear were thrown, the audience must wonder why it is not reported whether the launcegay hit or missed. A miss would have further reduced Sir Thopas' standing; a hit would have shown his ability with an unchivalric weapon. As neither hit nor miss is mentioned, it is probable that Thopas' taunts were the only things he threw. The next stanza, mainly a collection of minstrel tags containing the information that Thopas has "sydes small"--a feature of cowards--[11] emphasises his lack of bravery. Sir Thopas' arming, where the repetition of "And over that" (2051, 2053, 2056) produces the sense of excessive layer after layer of defensive armour being donned, reinforces the image of his timorousness. Thopas' arming occurs as soon as he arrives home and he sets out immediately he is armed to encounter Olifaunt on the morrow. When he leaves town, Thopas has a spear "of fyn ciprees" (2071) with "The heed ful sharpe ygrounde"

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[9] He may in withdrawing have been following the example given by King Arthur at the Tarn Watheling or in his meeting with Gromer Somer Joure. See "Arthur at the Tarn Watheling" and "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell".

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[10] Robinson reads "Abyen" as purchase, not await. If he is correct, then there is even less reason for Thopas' leaving the giant, for it is by the launcegay that Thopas intends to kill him.

[11] See below, p. 85.

(2073); he has not the launcegay of the first day, and therefore he cannot fulfil his boast of the previous meeting with Olifaunt to "perce his mawe" with this weapon; he must therefore be false of faith, unless he had cast the throwing spear at Olifaunt as suggested above, before his withdrawal from the realm of faery.

The last section of "Sir Thopas" is full of typical romance elements. It opens with a kind of table of contents before saying Thopas was superior to the heroes mentioned in a catalogue of "romances of prys" (2087).[12] The disparity between Thopas' dextrer and the ideal chivalric steed is pointed twice by the typical romance phrase "And forth upon his wey he glood/ As sparcle out of the bronde" (2094-95), recalling that Thopas' mount "gooth an ambil in the way" (2075). This doubling of images illustrates a feature of "Sir Thopas" no critic mentions: Chaucer's use of parallel phrases or incidents. "In bataille and in tourneyment" (1906) parallels "Of bataille and of chivalry" (2084). There are two catalogues of herbs or spices: 1950 _ff_. and 2043 _ff_. Thopas asks for "romances that been roiales" (2038) and Chaucer speaks of "romances of prys" (2087). Thopas falls in "love-longynge" (1962) while Chaucer promises a tale "of ladyes love-drury" (2085). There are two descriptions of Sir Thopas, but only one meeting with the giant, although a second might have occurred had the Host not cut short the poem, and in a way Chaucer-the-pilgrim has a double prologue: one before

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[12] A feature typical of the opening of a romance rather than the main body.

"Sir Thopas" and the other before "Melibee", which seems to argue that Chaucer intended to tell the tale of Melibeus all along but wanted to seem forced into it[13] and consequently wrote "Sir Thopas" as an entree. The doubling and trebling of incident and phrase, examples of which may be easily drawn from the text, are cleverly contrived to be well-nigh unnoticeable, and yet they contribute subliminally to the sense of the interminable that Chaucer so admirably achieves in approximately two hundred lines.

A parody is generally agreed to be a burlesque of a particular author's style or of a specific work. "Sir Thopas" does not hold just one work or one author up to ridicule and therefore must strictly be considered a mock poem, but Johnson defines parody as

> a kind of writing, in which the words of an author or his thoughts, are taken and by a slight change adapted to some new purpose.[14]

The "slight change" is caused by the juxtaposing of the author's words with those of other poets. The "new purpose" to which Chaucer twists the lines is criticism of themselves, which adaptation incidentally increases the enjoyment of those readers capable of appreciating both the original and modified forms. "Sir Thopas" is in fact a conflate parody in which passages written in all seriousness are conjoined to ridicule the faults of specific works. Critics have long considered "Sir Thopas" a parody, but it is only under something approximating Johnson's definition or Dryden's comment[15] that the small sections of the many works from which Chaucer drew his material may be regarded as being parodied. Chaucer obviously knew the romances he lists in "Sir Thopas"--"of Horn child and of Ypotys/ Of Beves and sir Gy/ Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour" (2088-90)--and it seems safe to assume that these works are to some extent parodied in his burlesque along with any discoverable romances of "popes and of cardinales".

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[13] R. M. Lumiansky, in *Of Sondry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales* (Austin: University of Texas, 1955), p. 94, suggests Chaucer's main joke was the foisting of "Melibee" on Harry Bailly. See below, pp. 103, n. 107.

[14] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 51.

In Loomis' opinion, "nothing recognizable save the name" from either "Horn Child" or "King Horn" is parodied in "Sir Thopas";[16] yet a close comparison of "King Horn" and the burlesque work reveals many parallels. King Horn is described as "whit so the flur/ Rose-red was his colur" (15-17), while Sir Thopas has "whit leere" (2047), "Whit was his face as payndemayn" (1915) and "His rode is lyk scarlet" (1917). "King Horn" could have furnished Chaucer with the idea for "Ful many a mayde, bright in bour,/ They moorne for hym paramour,/ Whan hem were bet to slepe" (1932-34), for Rymenhild "luvede so Horn child/ That negh heo gan wexe wild/. . ./ for by daye ne by nighte/ With him speke ne mighte" ("Horn" 255-56, 263-64). Horn refuses Rymenhild several times and even goes so far as to take his friend Athulf as chaperone when he meets her. Fikenhild, when he betrays his friend to her father, implies that Horn has had carnal knowledge of Rymenhild, but his statement[17] is "folie" (i. e., lies). Horn later refuses Reynhild, the King of Ireland's daughter, because of his vow to marry Rymenhild; he is therefore "chaast and no lechour" (ST 1935).

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[15] See above, pp. 24, 63.

[16] Laura H. Loomis, "The Tale of Sir Thopas," Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ed. W. F. Bryan and G. Dempster (Chicago: University Press, 1941), p. 501n.

Sir Oliphaunt's threat to Thopas, "But if thou prike out of myn haunt,/ Anon I sle thy steede" (2001-02), may have been suggested to Chaucer by the repetitious parallels

> Wend ut of my bure
> With muchel messaventure.
> Wel sone, bute thee flitte,
> With swerd ich thee anhitte.
> Wend ut of my londe
> Other thu shalt have shonde!
> ("Horn" 713-18)

And "Nabod he noght too longe" ("Horn" 724) may have suggested "Sire Thopas drow abak ful faste" (2017). "He had a semely nose" (ST 1919) could be derived from Horn's having, when dressed as a palmer, a "colmie snute" (1090)--"colmie", or dirty, being changed to "comlie" and thence to "semely".

"_Ypotis_--the story of how a Christian child converted the Roman Emperor--gives a burlesque turn to this list of 'romances of prys'," according to Manly,[18] and it is just as incongruous as Thopas' asking to be told romances "Of popes and of cardinales" whilst he is arming. Nothing seems to be used from it in Chaucer's poem, so that Everett may be correct in asserting that it was included in the catalogue solely to provide the rhyme for "prys".[19] Beues of Hamtoun provides "Murrier than the nightyngale"[20] and Thopas' long hair and beard: "His berd was ȝelw, to his brest wax/ And to his gerdel heng is fax."[21]

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[17] "He lith in bure/ Under coverture/ By Rymenhild" (699-701).

[18] J. M. Manly, ed., _Canterbury Tales_ (New York: Henry Holt, 1928), p. 634.

Guy of Warwick is the work most parodied in "Sir Thopas". The first two stanzas of the burlesque "are woven from phrases . . . in the unique stanzaic version [of Guy]."[22] It contains stereotyped hunting and riding phrases together with many details of the arming. Guy wears a hauberk from Jerusalem; his helm has a charbocle over the nasel[23] (249:7-12 Auch), and on top "stode a flour/ Wrouȝt it was of divers colour" (250:1-2 Auch). He has, of course, a spear, while Barrarde in his fight with Guy wears "two helmes styf and bryȝt/ And two hawberkis for drede of fyȝt" (9658-59 Caius), all of which items have some correspondence with parts of "Sir Thopas". Ladies who do not sleep for love of the hero are found in Guy, as is the image of the love-lorn hero hearing birds sing in a forest, while Thopas' rejection of an earthly mate could be inspired by Guy and Felice rejecting

[19] Dorothy Everett, "A Note on Ypotis," RES, 6 (1930), 48.

[20] See Loomis, p. 498.

[21] E. Kölbing, "Zu Chaucer's Sir Thopas," Englisch Studien, 11 (1888), 499.

[22] Loomis, p. 497.

[23] Ibid., pp. 526 ff.

all others as their beloved. Guy, before meeting Barrande, declares "I am of ferr contree" (9446 Caius) and one hundred and five lines later "Com I am fro fer contree" (9551), either of which could have suggested Thopas' being born "in fer contree" (1908). Guy, like "Sir Thopas", has hill and dale sections, postponed combat and, together with Lybeaus Desconus, encounters with a giant in which mounts are killed. These giant episodes also include references to a lady, the oath "Termagaunt", and victory by the "grace of God". Loomis finds Thopas' beard, girdle and shoes in Lybeaus Desconus, besides his "sherte", a "sheald of gold with boars heads and a spear head 'Scharp ygrounde'";[24] while elsewhere Lybeaus has a declared lack of armour[25] which he remedies, giving the source of the arming scene in "Sir Thopas",[26] and line 141 of Lybeaus, "That signy~~fied no~~ povert," parallels "That cost many a jane" (ST 1925).

Pleyndamour is so far untraced by the critics. They did find many other works that Chaucer probably knew and apparently used in constructing "Sir Thopas". These poems include "Eglamoure" (which may have suggested the division into three "fits" of "Sir Thopas"); "Amis", "Ipomandon", "Torrent" and "Perceval" (whose heroes sleep in forests, the horses of the last two knights sleeping also); "Ipomandon B" (for the list of the heroes' accomplishment and pastimes);[27] "Gamelyn"(which may be the source of the third "request" for silence); and "The Seven Sages" (which supplies Thopas' "saffroun" hair, "white leere", and the dream of an unknown beloved).[28]

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[24] Loomis, pp. 506 n, 526. Lybeaus Desconus has "His berde was yelewe as wax,/ To his girdyll hang his fax" (136-37 Lambeth), a possible borrowing from Beues (see above, p. 66). Lybeaus' shoes are ornamented with gold (139) just as are the Cid's (see below, p. 76). Herard in "Reinbrun" has "His berde was to is brest y-wax,/ To his gerder heng is fax" (34, 10-11 Auch).

[25] Loomis, pp. 529-530.

[26] W. W. Skeat, ed., The Prioresses Tale, Sire Thopas, The Monkes Tale, The Clerkes Tale, The Squieres Tale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), p. 164.

"Athelston" too may be parodied in Sir Thopas' appearance and in his being "sweete as is the brembul flour" (ST 1936), for lines 70-72 state that Athelston was "Also whit so lilie-flour,/ Red as rose of here colour,/ As bright as blosme on brere".

Loomis notes that "Sir Launfal" has a setting and a situation similar to that of "Sir Thopas", as well as a "longing hero".[29] However, Launfal's longing is not for a lady. He is hoping that he "mighte conforted be/ By a launde under this cyte" (208-09). Launfal is "chaast and no lechour" (ST 1935). He disapproves of Guenevere's having "lemmanis under her Lord" ("Launfal" 47) and, when she makes advances to him, he rejects her (675-84). Triamour, until Launfal came, "lete" all her joy, just as the "Full many a mayde" had mourned for Thopas. Launfal could provide the giant motif, for he goes to fight with Sir Valentine who

[27] Loomis, p. 508.

[28] Mainly supplied by Loomis, with some reference to Kölbing's "Zu Chaucer's Sir Thopas".

[29] Loomis, p. 516.

"fiftene feet . . . was longe" (512). "Carbonkeles" appear in "Launfal": "As the mone they shone aright" (272). Parallels or near parallels of lines found in "Sir Thopas" and "Sir Launfal" not mentioned by Loomis are:

| "Thopas" | "Launfal" |
|---|---|
| of myrthe and of solas (1904) | With joye and greet solas (9) |
| Whit was his face as payndemayn (1915) | They werein whit as floure (261)<br>Hare faces were whit as snow on downe (241) |
| His rode is lyk scarlet in greyn (1917) | Har rode was red (242) |
| In bataille and in tourneyment (1906) | In werre ne in turnement (331) |
| And over that his cote-armour<br>As whit as is lilye flour (2056-57) | His armur, that was whit as floure (742) |

Chaucer also took "the identical phrasing and rhyme of the fairy's command that the hero forsake all women for her only", and the idea that she must be sought "privily", from "Launfal".[30]

"Thomas of Erceldoune" provides another longing hero[31] who this time hears "throstyll cokke and papeioye" singing in the wood; his fairy love is associated with music, as is Thopas', while the horse Thopas rides on his way to fight with Olifaunt, a dapple grey with a saddle of "roelle bone" and a bright bridle, is that of Thomas' fairy mistress.

Loomis also suggests that

> Chaucer burlesqued both title and incident [of Cursor Mundi, story of David and Goliath] by transferring to the giant the one and only slingshot of fiction, and by

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[30] Loomis, p. 516.

[31] *Ibid*.

> having him chase the Child who should have slain him. David's doffing of Saul's armour, his scorn of weapons, may have contributed something to the amusing contrast in Thopas, where the hero, already armed, defers battle until he has more armour, and later acquires, piece by piece, a whole panoply. The multiplicity of giants in Torrent, the detail of the hero's throwing stones at one of them, may have enhanced Chaucer's perception of the general absurdity of the giant theme.[32]

Kölbing goes through "Sir Thopas" practically line by line, finding parallels in "Iwain", "Orfeo", "Mort Arthure", "Alisaunder", "Reinbrun", the Vulgate "Ferumbras", "Herod", "Arthur and Merlin", "Eger and Grim" and "The Squire of Low Degree", besides those he discovered in the works discussed earlier.[33]

Mead finds that the herbs mentioned in "Sir Thopas" are found in "Kyng Alisander"[34] and in The Romaunt of the Rose, but not in "The Squire of Low Degree", and concludes that "Sir Thopas" is not burlesquing the latter.[35] If Mead is correct, Chaucer could not draw on "The Squire", as The Canterbury Tales would have been written some fifty years before it.[36]

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[32] Loomis, pp. 531-32. Richard Coer de Lion also has warriors armed with staff-slings; see F. Fairholt, Costume in England (London: George Bell, 1896), II, p. 370. Also, Ms. Benet College, Cambridge, has pictures of staff-slingers.

[33] Kölbing, passim.

[34] Also noted by Irving Linn, "The Arming of Sir Thopas", MLN, 51 (1936), 300.

[35] W. E. Mead, ed., The Squyr of Low Degre (Boston: Ginn, 1904), pp. liv ff.

Skeat finds a parallel in "The Squire of Low Degree" for Chaucer's catalogue of birds (ST 1950 ff.),[37] considers "Sir Degrevant"'s "Here endyth the furst fit./ Howe say ye? will ye any more of hit?" a source for lines 2079-80 of "Sir Thopas", and suggests Chaucer may be laughing at himself as well as at others.[38]

Many critics have noted that "Sir Thopas" is reminiscent of certain passages in the poet's own early work.[39] Courthope's opinion that the end of the "Monk's Tale" parallels "Sir Thopas"[40] is only correct in that both the Monk and Chaucer-the-pilgrim are prevented from finishing their tales. Although Green is correct in saying that the "Knight's Tale", lines 2129-78, could have been drawn on by Chaucer,[41] two of the passages he cites as echoing Thopas' love for the elf-queen (Troilus 164-65, Romaunt 5053-56) show no relationship, whilst the third, "hir, that is so bright" (Romaunt 2570) does faintly correspond to "oon that shoon ful brighte" (ST 2034).

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[36] Mead, pp. lxv-lxxvii. This dating of "The Squire" would also dispose of Skeat's contention that Chaucer drew his catalogue of birds from "The Squire of Low Degree".

[37] Mead concurs (pp. lix ff.).

[38] Skeat, pp. 158-59, 167; Introduction, p. xxv.

[39] See A. F. Getty, "The Medieval Modern Conflict in Chaucer," PMLA, 47 (1932), 399; also see J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase (London: Cambridge University Press, 1943), p. 153.

[40] W. F. Courthope, A History of English Poetry (London: Macmillan, 1895), I, p. 258 ff.

[41] A. Wigfall Green, "Chaucer's Sir Thopas: Meter, Rhyme and Contrast," University of Mississippi Studies in English, I (1960), 8.

Raymond Preston cites *Romaunt of the Rose*, 1359 *ff*., *Parliament of Fowles*, 337 *ff*., Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, 139-140, and *Troilus* II, 920, as sources of the catalogues of herbs and birds in "Sir Thopas".[42] In these references are an abundance of riches, for not only are there the spices and birds of "Sir Thopas" but many others besides; so many, in fact, that it would have been well-nigh impossible for Chaucer to have constructed catalogues without including some of the birds and spices he had used earlier. These catalogues, and the references to phrases used in "Sir Thopas"--"that joye it was to here" (*Legend*, prologue, 140) and "it is no nay" ("Clerk's Tale" 817, 1139)[43] are rather proof that Chaucer was using phrases familiar to him from romances or from previous use, than that he was consciously parodying himself. All future discussion of self-parody may be disposed of by this argument, except for those contentions of critics who insist that he was consciously ridiculing his earlier work. To those who argue thus, lines 3205-07 of "The Miller's Tale", which tell how Nicholas had his room "Ful fetisly ydight with herbes swoote/ And he hymself as sweete as is the roote/ Of lycoris, or any cetewale", and line 3234, describing Alison, who had a "body gent and smal", are offered as subscribing part of the catalogue of herbs, a parallel to Thopas' being

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[42] Raymond Preston, *Chaucer* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1952), p. 210.

[43] Also cited by Preston.

"sweete as is the brembul flour/ That bereth the rede hepe" (ST 1936-37) and having "sydes smale" (ST 2026). Troilus and Criseyde supplies the resting in the forest, full of love-longing:

> So on a day he leyde hym doun to slepe,
> And so byfel that in his slep hym thoughte
> That in a forest faste he welk to wepe
> For love of here that hym these peynes wroughte
> (V, 1233-36)

and Criseyde, like Thopas, "slepeth softe" whilst their paramours "turnest ful ofte!" (Troilus I, 195-96). In the description of Cupid in The Legend of Good Women, Chaucer would have found both "lylye floures" stuck into a headpiece and "two firy dartes" (Legend 160-67), as opposed to Thopas' single launcegay.[44] The Knight in the "General Prologue" "wered a gypon . . . with his habergeon" (75-76) and he speaks of "cote armure over his harnays" ("Knight's Tale" 2140), giving three of the items of armour Chaucer provides for Sir Thopas, besides telling the other pilgrims to "herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite" (2646), which is a close parallel to "Now holde youre mouth, par charitee" (ST 2081). The Wife of Bath sits on an "amblere" (GP 469), the Monk is fond of "prikyng and of huntyng for the hare" (GP 191), and the Pardoner has "Bulles of popes and of cardynales" ("Pardoner's Prologue" 342). While standard minstrel tags are to be found in many of Chaucer's works, gathering snippets from the other works would, given sufficient time, build up an awesome collection of parallels which would be unlikely to prove conscious self-parody by Chaucer and, although the search would be interesting, it would be wasted effort.

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[44] Chauncey Wood, "Chaucer and Sir Thopas: Irony and Concupiscence," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 14 (1972-73), 389, suggests that Cupid's being armed with a launcegay (Confessio Amantis, 8: 2794-2802) may be a source for Chaucer's "Sir Thopas". For further discussion of Confessio Amantis as a source see below, p. 74.

Chaucer, from his knowledge of the French _Romaunt of the Rose_, could have culled many elements burlesqued in "Sir Thopas". In Chaucer's probably much-modified _Romaunt_, the reader becomes aware, despite the excellent verse, of the repetition of catalogues and similarities of descriptive passages--faults he ridicules in "Thopas". John Gower's _Confessio Amantis_, too, affords parallels to "Sir Thopas". Gower-the-lover-visionary went into a wood in May (Book I, 100-111);[45] there he complained of his woe and threw himself to the ground where he appealed to Cupid and Venus. The gods appeared to him, and Cupid "A firy Dart [he] thoughte he hente/ And threw it thurgh [his] herte rote" (I:144-45). In his final vision Gower saw elderly lovers going toward Venus "With harp and lute and citole" (8:2679) while he was again "leide/ Swounende upon the grene grass" (8:2749-50). Then Cupid

> a fyri Launcegay
> Which whilom thurgh [his] herte he caste
> He pulleth out
> (8:2798-2800)

before Venus bade Gower "tarie thou mi Court no more" (8:2924). Throughout most of Gower's poem "Genius" counsels "Amans" through tales he must remember so that he may reclaim "his forgotten natural self, in order that he may be released from its fantastic substitute."[46] In "Sir Thopas", too, the hero was to be told tales, but these were to confirm him in his "fantastic substitute": an elf-queen for a woman. Chaucer (to whom Confessio Amantis was dedicated) probably appreciated the poem, especially its allegory of man divided being as the state divided. The poem's averral that as man should have his soul, intelligence and passions at one, so should the realm--through knowledge drawn from experience--be properly governed for the common profit of the kingdom,[47] finds responsive chords in Chaucer's work. "Sir Thopas" was written partly to present this same idea, that each estate should attend to its God-given duties, and it is possible that Confessio Amantis, a poem involving the concept of love and lover and replete with stories of lovers, should be that work Chaucer acknowledges in his "romances of prys" as full of love, or "Pleyndamour".

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[45] _Confessio Amantis_, ed. R. A. Peck (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968). Citations from Gower are to this text.

An hitherto unexamined source for "Sir Thopas" is the third canto of the mid-twelfth century poem The Cid,[48] now existing in a verse copy of 1307 and a thirteenth century prose version.[49] The story could have reached Chaucer in several ways: via John of Gaunt, who claimed the crown of

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[46] Peck, introduction to Confessio Amantis, p. xvi.

[47] Ibid., p. xxix.

[48] The Poem of the Cid, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965). All citations from The Cid are to this text.

[49] Ibid., preface, pp. vii-viii.

Castille,[50] John's first wife, Constance of Castille, or Isabella of Castille, wife of John's brother, Edmund Duke of York; from a copy of the history of Spain prepared for Alfonso of Castille shortly before his half-sister, the ten-year-old Infanta Eleanor, married Edward I of England; or from Chaucer's visits to the Continent, from Spanish merchants he met as comptroller of customs, or from pilgrims who had visited St. James' tomb at Compostella. Some of these people may also have afforded Chaucer an audience capable of appreciating references to the Spanish poem.

The Cid contains many elements common to Chaucer's other sources--for example: minstrel comments, tags, and repeated incidents. It is replete with references to riding, besides supporting the theme of true gentilesse coming from actions and not solely through birth, a theme found throughout the Canterbury Tales. Some of the humour of "Sir Thopas" could arise from Thopas' possessing certain physical attributes of the Cid, while behaving as a composite of the cowardly, villainous brothers, the princes of Carrión. The Cid's hair is long; he wears "good cloth hose" ["of Brugges were his hosen broun" (ST 1923)]; shoes embroidered with golden threads ["shoon of cordewane (Cordoba)"(ST 1922)]; "a mantle of such great price that all who behold it are astonished"[51] ["His robe was of syklatoun/ That coste many a jane" (ST

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[50] John based his claim to the Castillian throne on his wife's being the eldest daughter of Pedro, not through his great-grandmother Eleanor. (Pedro of Castille, 1350-1368)

[51] The Cid, p. 117. Further references to this work are incorporated in my text.

1924-25)]. If Asur Gonzalez's jibe "let him go back to his mills on the Ubierna and dress his millstones and grind his grist" (Cid p. 127) is to be believed, the noble "compeador" is a merchant-class knight like Sir Thopas. The latter's "fair berynge", his "semely nose" and his being "fair and gent/ In bataille and in tourneyment" (ST 1905-06) are more typical of the princes of Carrión. Ferdinand Gonzalez, one of the brothers, who has requested the right to strike the first blow in a battle against the Moors, flees when one of the enemy spurs towards him, much as Thopas fled from Olifaunt. The meeting with Olifaunt is more closely paralleled in The Cid when Abengalbon, a Moorish vassal of the Cid, angrily dismisses the brothers from his territory for plotting his death (Cid p. 103). This incident occurs after they had decided their child-wives, the Cid's daughters, were not fit mates for them. ["No womman is/ Worthy to be my make" (ST 1981-82).] They do not aspire to the hands of "elf-queens"; rather they consider themselves "a fitting match for the daughters of kings or emperors" (Cid p. 99).[52] The princes, like Thopas, ride in a fair forest; however, it is not their steeds whose "sydes were al blood" (ST 1967) but their wives, whom they flay with spurs and leave as prey for the wild beasts and birds (Cid p. 105).[53] This they do to disembarrass themselves of the girls and also to win "noble revenge" on the "pretentious" Cid and his followers, whose contempt for their cowardice (in battle and on the occasion of the lion's escape) they deserve but cannot bear. After their punishment neither girl, now "Neither wyf ne childe" (ST 1996), "durste ride or goon" (1995) after her husband, even were she able to do so. The "bravery" of one prince in hiding under the bench on which the Cid slept, whilst the other hid behind a vat where he soiled himself in fear on the occasion of the escape of the Cid's pet lion, adds point to their heroism in sending away their servants so that the wives might be killed; one may compare Thopas' daring in going to the forest where "is many a wilde best,/ Ye, bothe bukke and hare" (1945-46), while the princes' "holding their wives in their arms as if with love" (Cid p. 104) the night before the attempted murder could add an ironic facet to the image of Thopas' giving "his steede som solas" (1972).

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[52] The unfitness of the Cid's daughters as mates is reiterated in various forms on pp. 105, 106, 123, 124 and 126 of The Cid.

[53] Compare Sir Thopas, who "pryked as he were wood/ His faire steede in his prikynge/ So swatte that men myghte him wrynge;/ His sydes were al blood" (1964-67).

Thopas' proposed second meeting with the giant never occurs, but Olifaunt's "hevedes three" may have been suggested by the Cid's being represented by champions who were "all three as one, in defense of their lord" (Cid pp. 133-34),[54] in the single combats to revenge the flaying of his daughters. Thopas' rejection of immediate combat with the giant finds a parallel in the princes' attempting to avoid Alfonso's court where the Cid confronts them, and in their requesting time to obtain arms and armour before encountering the Cid's champions. Ferdinando's wearing three coats of mail (Cid p. 136) for the single combat could have suggested Thopas' putting on an aketoun, haubergeon and hawberke. If so, Chaucer must have intended Thopas to appear cowardly, for Ferdinando is shown as a coward, although presumably he would also have worn a quilted tunic to prevent chafing by the mail[55] and is therefore more cowardly than Thopas.[56] The omission of the sword from Sir Thopas' equipment in his arming could be inspired by the princes' being forced to return to the Cid the two priceless swords he had given them as wedding presents, whilst the request for romances "Of popes and of cardinales" may arise from Bishop Jerome's bravery in slaying two Moors with his lance and five more with his sword before any of his fellows start to fight (Cid pp. 93-94).

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[54] Three champions were required, for a relative of the two brothers also insulted the Cid and his family when the law-court enquiry was convened.

Both incident and plot of "Sir Thopas" may have been suggested by The Cid: the initial outriding unequipped for war, spurring so that the steed's sides are bloodied, meeting with an awesome opponent, postponement of battle to obtain armour, and the arming of the hero are to be found in both, as they are to be found in several other romances. The transference of the hero's ability and presence to a coward heightens the contrast and humour and, as Carrión is a Castillian house, may have found favour in the eyes of those opposed to the contemporary rulers of Castille.

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[55] The Cid's men are to "don their quilted tunics, lest their armor chafe them, and over their tunics their coats of mail. . . . Above their armor they will wear their ermines and other skins" (Cid p. 116).

[56] For consideration of whether Sir Thopas is cowardly in his armour, see below, pp. 86 ff.

From the above discussion of parallels, it is obvious that Chaucer in "Sir Thopas" is parodying the romances wholesale. For almost every idea, for almost every line, there are at least two sources. Sir Thopas is a less worthy subject than any of the romance heroes. The poem imitates its originals well, using in some instances quotations of actual lines, incidentally fulfilling Dryden's and Johnson's definitions of the parody.

Because the opening of "Sir Thopas" is true to the romance form, the audience would expect a typical chivalric tale until they heard the hero was called Thopas. Chaucer's use of a woman's name for his knight, his associating him with a stone of great virtue, would raise suspicions in the minds of his hearers that there would be more to the poem than was superficially apparent. The cluster of images with which Chaucer's audience was probably conversant could render it funny and open up several alternative interpretations of the poem for those members of the pilgrimage, or of the court, capable of appreciating that the work functions on more than one level.

Bede and the author of the Lapidaire Chrétien say that "Kings should prefer topaz to all other stones . . . as it should remind them of heaven"[57] and the Lapidaire Chrétien adds that it symbolizes the nine orders of angels;[58] by extension, Sir Thopas should be the perfect Christian knight, the representative of God on earth; yet he apparently refuses to engage Olifaunt when he is seeking a faery queen, and in his arming he omits the most important symbols of the Christian knight. It is possible that here Sir Thopas is a symbol of Richard II, God's appointed, and that Thopas' faery queen was the sovereignty of Ireland, a country often depicted as a young girl who looks like a queen. The country of "faery so wilde" then becomes Ireland, where Richard went to confirm the hold on the country established by Edward III. He returned to Britain with only marginal success, having fought no decisive battles, and he was about to go back for another Irish campaign when Bolingbroke came from France to usurp the English throne. That "Sir Thopas" ceases before the second meeting with Olifaunt may be ascribed to Richard's not having returned to Ireland when the poem was composed rather than to the King's deposition, for that event probably occurred after the tale was completed.

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[57] Lapidaire Chrétien, ed. Baisier, p. 79.

Alternatively, Sir Thopas as God's representative could symbolize some aspect of the Church--the misuse of authority, the selling of pardons, or the "elvish" behaviour of some religious which is revealed in Piers Plowman[59] and in the depiction of Chaucer's Friar. The topaz was supposed to keep its wearer chaste and to raise his thoughts towards heaven,[60] yet despite Thopas' being "chaast and no lechour" he thinks to marry an elf-queen, and his thoughts are not of heaven. His attitude is more that of Chaucer's monk than of his parfit gentil knight, and were this suggestion true it would add more bite to Sir Thopas' request for romances of popes and cardinals.

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[58] Baisier, p. 78.

[59] See prologue to William Langland, Piers the Plowman, ed. W. W. Skeat (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), lines 45-111.

The topaz is supposed to have changed colour as the moon changed:

> quant la lune est laide et pluieuse,
> sy est ceste pierre plus laide, et
> quant elle est belle, sy est la pierre
> belle et de plus gentile coleur.[61]

It is possible, therefore, that Chaucer is burlesquing those knights like Gawain who gained strength as the sun rose higher in the sky, by having his knight vary as the moon. The topaz's other virtues--the lessening of passion in lunatics, the ability to staunch the flow of blood, and in particular the easing of haemorrhoids--[62] reflect possible facets of Sir Thopas which might appeal to the ruder portions of Chaucer's audience.

Besides Thopas' having a name normally given to girls, his appearance tends to be womanly. Carroll Camden Jr. quotes from _The Secreta Secretorum_: "tho' whyche bene ouer whyte bene dredfull like to woman," and from Saunders:

[60] _Lapidaire du Roi Philippe_, Baisier, pp. 113-114.

[61] _Ibid_.

[62] "The Ashmole Lapidary," in _English Medieval Lapidaries_, ed. J. Evans and M. S. Serjeantson (London: E. E. T. S., 1933), p. 58.

> this colour [white] is very fit for a woman, who of herself is luxurious and fearfull; but not to a man, for it would speak him effeminate [63]

to support his suggestion that Chaucer is burlesquing the typical knightly hero by describing him as effeminate. Loomis writes:

> Chaucer borrowed for Thopas the proverbial color phrases *rede as rose*, *whit as flour* commonly used for women and children. He enhanced the suggestion of effeminacy by mention of Thopas' nose, his *whit leere* and *sydes smale*.[64]

But such colouring is sometimes found in noble warriors, such as Havelok. Curry, in *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty*, notes that the cheeks of both men and women to be beautiful must be fresh and well-coloured and, citing page 187 of the Everyman edition of *The Mabinogion* (trans. Lady Charlotte Guest), that the complexion of a perfect man should contain a mingling of white and red.[65]

Thopas' having a face as white as "payndemayn" would possibly be amusing because of the practice of "those that are 'foule and fade'" making themselves fairer with "oblaunchere or ouþerfloure, To make hem whytter of coloure".[66] As an affectation of the time it was of itself a valid target for burlesque. The effect given by Chaucer's description is not of a mingling of white and red but of a clash of contrasting colours. Any audience expecting a normal face would be amused by the clownlike visage with rose-red lips and, judging from the emphasis, a large nose set in a face as white as tomorrow's bread, surmounted by a poppy-red forehead[67]--all surrounded by saffron-coloured hair and beard. The total effect is not one of effeminacy but one of a jester or a country bumpkin.[68] It is this face which was supposed to have "many a mayde . . ./ . . . moorne for [Thopas] paramour" (1932-33). It is no wonder he carried a carbuncle amongst his arms, for anyone would need to have his eyes soothed and his heart and body comforted[69] who saw such a face peering from the panoply of armour Thopas adopted, all jouncing along on a noble plough horse--although it could seem that the wretched would forget their adversity through laughter at the vision. The individual parts of the description admittedly are mainly used for women, but the lines which seem most to assert Thopas' effeminacy,

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[63] Carroll Camden Jr., "Notes and Observations: The Physiognomy of Sir Thopas," *RES*, 2 (1935), 327-328.

[64] Loomis, p. 504.

[65] W. C. Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1916).

[66] Curry, p. 93, quoting Robert de Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*.

> And sweete as is the brembul flour
> That bereth the rede hepe
>
> (1936-37)

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[67] Interpreting "scarlet in grayn" as the red amongst grain in fields, i. e., poppies. Robinson in his note to line 1917 has "i. e., cloth dyed with grain, with cochineal." The first reading is simpler and probably more valid. As cochineal are red wood-lice the colour would not vary greatly, whichever is correct.

[68] See E. C. Knowlton, "Chaucer's Man of Law," *JEGP*, 23 (1924), 83-93.

[69] See L. Pannier, *Les Lapidaires Français du Moyen Age des XII$^{e}$, XIII$^{e}$ et XIV$^{e}$ Siècles* (Paris: 1822), p. 2. Quoted in Shackford, *Legends and Satires*, pp. 115-116.

are normally neglected.[70]

The standard against which Thopas has to be measured is that of the romance hero, who has

> great stature, enormous strength, long sinewy arms, broad square breast and shoulders together with a small waist and retreating stomach. His legs are long with thighs thick and strong . . . . the warrior's forehead is broad, his features noble and aristocratic. Like that of a wild animal is his bearing in battle, his voice . . . like the roar of a lion or the blast of a trumpet.[71]

But Chaucer, besides describing Thopas' plebeian appearance, only tells us Thopas has "sydes smale", a possible feature of a true knight. Metham's physiognomy, however, states "The sydys, qwan thei be sclender and pleyn, thei sygnyfy ferfullnes,"[72] an observation borne out by Thopas' being in flight from the giant when Chaucer gives this snippet of description. Chaucer, by omission of his hero's bodily features, as by Thopas' lack of necessary pieces of chivalric equipment, could intend to amuse. It is more likely, however, that he realised expansion of his knight's description and elements of romance he only touched upon, or the inclusion of omitted chivalric features, would produce a prolix, involved story like his

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[70] Only George Williams, in "Chaucer's Best Joke," A New View of Chaucer (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), mentions them and then only to suggest that they imply Richard II is target and original for Sir Thopas. He ignores them in his argument that Thopas is homosexual (see below pp. 99 ff.) although they, more than any other, might support such an interpretation.

[71] Curry, pp. 3-4. See also above, pp. 11-12.

[72] John Metham, Works, ed. Hardin Craig (London: E. E. T. S., 1926), p. 138.

"Squire's Tale",[73] defeating his purpose.

Thopas' description is not a burlesque of the usual knight-errant but a portrait of pretension. This person, Thopas, has probably property worth £40 a year and is therefore entitled to knighthood. His features are common, even ludicrous, with the humour arising from the automatic comparison between this nouveau-riche bourgeois and knights of breeding. Thopas does not return to a castle when leaving Olifaunt, but returns to "towne" where he accoutres himself in what was, if not the best armour money could buy, the most complete defensive outfit that any knight could wish to have. Some of his earlier equipment, however, is lost in the process.

Sir Thopas' arms and armour are not sources of laughter for the modern reader who lacks knowledge of medieval norms, and possibly they were not funny for Chaucer's contemporary audience. It is only because "Sir Thopas" is known to be a burlesque that there has been any examination of the armour as a vehicle for ridicule. The amount of armour that Thopas dons seems excessive, but there are accounts of knights wearing these items and it is possible that it is merely the fact of the arming and its attendant situation that is amusing, rather than the armour itself.

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[73] Norman E. Eliason in "The Language of Chaucer's Poetry," *Anglistica*, 17 (1972), 146-147, suggests the "Squire's Tale" is a parody of the chaotic structure of romances, that the squire's "promises to speed up the narrative succeed only in slowing it down", that "the transitions are mock-transitions" and that "it is part of an elaborate but puzzling joke" in the introduction to the "Man of Law's Tale". Most promises to expedite tales only extend them; lines 77-78 of the "Man of Law's Tale" could show that that persona disliked the "Squire's Tale", and might argue that the "Squire's Tale" should immediately precede the "Man of Law's Tale". Robinson's statements that "The 'Squire's Tale' is a typical romance" and that the attribution of "comic or ironic purpose to Chaucer" in it "perhaps goes too far" is probably correct. See Robinson, p. 717.

The launcegay, said by Skeat to have been a half pike or dart whose name is derived from the Moorish "azagaya",[74] is generally accepted as being an unchivalric weapon. In Malory we find Torres, before he is knighted, displeasing his "father" by "shotynge, or castynge dartes" (Malory p. 73). Perceval in Chretien's work kills the red knight by casting a spear. He had not known it was unknightly to do so and is sorry when he discovers his error. Wolfram von Eisenbach's Parzival includes "ich enreiche dir kein gabylot;/ diu ritterschaft dir daz verbot."[75] However, Hatto finds that mailed horsemen used casting spears at Hastings,[76] and Furnivall and Kirk find that John Asteley was to be provided with "1 castinge speare paynted. . . . [to] hostilie, by our licence do armes with a knighte straunger [Don Philip Boyle of Aragon] in our [Henry VI's] presence"[77], on January 30, 1442. It is therefore doubtful whether the assegai of "Sir Thopas" was or was not a valid weapon for a knight. If the javelin were chivalrically acceptable, then Sir Thopas is shown as even more cowardly in his withdrawal without fighting Olifaunt than if it were not. In any case Thopas should have fought and not left his sword sheathed.

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[74] Skeat, p. 158.

[75] Quoted in A. T. Hatto, "Archery and Chivalry: A Noble Prejudice," MLR, 35 (1940), 40.

[76] Ibid., pp. 48-49. See Bayeux Tapestry.

[77] F. J. Furnivall and R. Kirk, eds., Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrimage (London: Chaucer Society, 1903), pp. 28-30.

On his initial expedition, Sir Thopas has "A long swerd by his side" (1943) but when he is fully armed, no mention is made of this weapon. It could be that by omitting one of the main items of any knight's arms and relating the large amount of protective armour, Chaucer is commenting on Thopas' courage.[78] It could be that the charbocle is in fact the sword's pommel, and that Chaucer is presuming his audience's knowledge of this use for the gem.[79] As he had to be armed, it is safe to presume that Thopas was not wearing armour on his first outriding and that therefore his "spere" is not the same as the launcegay with which he was originally armed.

Sir Thopas in his arming puts on

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[78] That is, that he was like Barrarde, who wore "two helmes styf and bryȝt/ And two hawberkis for drede of fyȝt" (Guy of Warwick 9658-59 Caius) to combat Guy, or like Ferdinando of The Cid, who wore three coats of mail "For percyng of his herte" (SP 2052). See above, p. 79. The three coats were only partially successful, for although the third coat did stop the lance's penetration, it was thrust a hand's breadth into Ferdinando's body when he was struck.

[79] See John L. Melton, "Sir Thopas' Charbocle," Phil Q, 35 (1956), 215-217. He quotes the Caius manuscript (ed. Kölbing: London: E. E. T. S., 1886), re Sir Launcelot's sword: "þe pomel was off charbocle stone". In the fight against the giant Colebrand in Guy, Guy wears his own helm, which has a charbocle set over the nasel (rather like a miner's lamp) "Ther-with myȝt men se anyȝt/ As yf hyt had been the day lyȝt" (10538-39 Caius). The stone would have been a disadvantage to its wearer in a conflict against another Christian knight, for "the wretched who in good faith look at this stone are comforted and forget their adversity. By the virtue which God has sent, it soothes the eyes, comforts the heart and body . . . and restores and lightens the heart" (Parmier, quoted in Shackford, Legends and Satires). See above, p. 84.

A breech and eek a sherte;
And nexte his sherte an aketoun
And over that an haubergeoun
. . . .
And over that a fyn hawberk
. . . .
And over that his cote-armour
(2049-51, 2053, 2056)

Manly thinks this absurd,[80] but Herben and Linn disagree. Herben says that the aketoun was a padded garment to prevent chafing by mail, that wearing an haubergeon over an aketoun was common practice, and that if the hauberk means a superimposed plate defense, then Chaucer's description is plausible and correct.[81] Fairholt in his Costume in England says that the whole of the articles mentioned above "might be distinguished in an effigy of the Chaucerian era in Ash Church, Kent."[82] The hauberk of plate is one of splints. He also reproduces a woodcut from a manuscript of Bocace's "Livre des Nobles Femmes" in which the knight, in his breech and shirt, is putting on a quilted hacketon. His hauberk of mail, gauntlets, and jambeaux are resting on the ground.

Irving Linn cites Strutt's A Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England (London, 1842), in which breeches and shirts are mentioned as being worn next to the skin by knights. He finds many examples of the wearing of an aketoun and one reference to the wearing of an haubergeon over an aketoun in Gaydon's "Sage" and, comparing the arming of Sir Thopas with that of Roland, Otuel and Clarel in Roland and Otuel, finds that "the items when ranged in parallel columns show notable agreement."[83]

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[80] Manly, pp. 632-633.

[81] S. J. Herben, Jr., "Arms and Armour in Chaucer," Speculum, 12 (1937), 475-487.

[82] Fairholt, p. 154.

Sir Gawain, in his arming before going to meet the Green Knight at the Green Chapel

> Fyrst . . . clad hym in his clothes, the colde for to were,
> And sythen his other harnays, that holdely was keped
> Both his paunce and his plates, piked ful clene,
> The rynges rokked of the roust of his riche bruny[84]

not forgetting

> His cote wyth the conysaunce of the clere werkes
> (2026)

or "cote-armour", which was put on over the other armour.

Sir Thopas' armour, genuine enough in reality, would not be affectation unless those who carved the effigy or etched the brasses were indicating their dislike of the knights by showing them as cowards who wore too much armour. This seems unlikely, for the knights' families would probably object, refuse to pay, or even destroy the sculpture. Chaucer, then, with regard to the armour, might only be parodying those works which had long accounts of arming.

Le Libre del Orde de Carrayleria[85] seems to have been much copied and translated during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One manuscript, in St. John's College, Oxford, contains "Le Romance de Melibee and Prudence", "Traité

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[83] Linn, 309.

[84] Lines 2015-18; see Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. A. C. Cawley (London: Dent, 1962).

[85] Ramón Lull, The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry, trans. William Caxton (London: E. E. T. S., 1926).

Politique sur les Devoirs respectifs de Princes & des Sujets", "Les Romanes des 7 [sic] Sages", "L'Ordre de Chevalerie", and a French version of the tale of Griselda. Most of these works were used by Chaucer, and it is possible that he had read this manuscript. The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry, after an introduction involving a hermit's exposition of the apocryphal founding of the order of knighthood to a squire, outlines and explains the duties of a knight. In Chapter 6 there is a symbolical interpretation of the knight's arms and armour. The crosslike sword symbolizes Christ's sacrifice, for which reason the knight should vanquish God's enemies, while its two edges represent chivalry and justice. The spear signifies truth, its iron head strength, its pennon fearlessness of falseness or treachery. The helmet represents humility, which defends the knight from wickedness; the hauberk is a castle or fortress against vices such as treason. Leg harness is to keep the knight true to his chivalric vows, to punish malefactors, while spurs are a token of diligence and swiftness (Ordre of Chyualry pp. 76 ff.). The items Chaucer gives Sir Thopas are mainly omitted from the list,[86] unless the aketoun and haubergeon are taken as other levels of hauberks so that he is shown extremely well protected against vice; because the spear is of knightly quality, Thopas is both strong and truthful. His lily-white cote-armour is commensurate with his being an untried knight, as is the lack of a pennon. His having no sword, however, implies he has no intention of vanquishing God's enemies, nor does he have concepts of chivalry or justice. That his helm is of latoun, a soft zinc-copper alloy of little defensive value, implies that he is proud. Where before Thopas wore spurs and rode swiftly, he seems not to have them after his arming, for they are not mentioned; but then neither is footwear, sword, nor pennon, and it is possible that Chaucer intended his audience to presume them. If they are omitted intentionally, however, Thopas is presented as stripped of knighthood, his sword and spurs having been taken from him.

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[86] Linn considers their omission "significant" in making Chaucer's satire "unmistakable" (300).

Thopas commands his "mynstrales/ And geestours for to tellen tales/ . . . / Of romances that been roiales,/ Of popes and of cardinales,/ And eek of love-likynge" (2035-40), and although the royal romances and those concerning love may be those of the catalogue of romances, they do not contain stories of prelates. While it is possible that the line was inserted for bathos, it could be that Chaucer was referring to works familiar to his audience, or to actual religious personages of a warlike bent, and it should not be forgotten that many churchmen in Chaucer's time were younger sons of noble families, and that bishops were feudal lords wielding considerable political power.

Fictional romances "Of popes and of cardinales" include "The Trentals of St. Gregoury" and "A Life of St. Jerome". Loomis suggests that these works of the Cotton Caligula A II Manuscript, which is thought to have been used by Chaucer, may have suggested the line to him.[87] Jerome's fighting ability in The Cid, or the account of Bishop Turpin's bravery in The Song of Roland, or in "The Sege of Melayne" where he has an even more prominent role as the general commanding one hundred thousand priests, could also be fictional works of which Chaucer's contemporaries would be aware. The line may, however, be merely a solitary hit at "Havelok the Dane", which contains a possible original for "Of popes and of cardinales" in line 428: "Of patriark and of pope."

There is an abundance of actual warrior-clerics. The Emperor Frederick in 1167 at Rome, in his attempt to keep Victor III (elected by the Cardinals) as Pope rather than Alexander III (elected by Rome's commons), had in his army the Archbishop of Cologne, as well as the Bishops of Liège, Spire, Ratisbonne and Verdun, while in 1176 Frederick had a seventh army under the Archbishops of Magdebourg and Cologne and the chief prelates of Germany.[88] The Abbott of Hennecourt in 1339 organised the defense of that town so well that the attackers were beaten (Fr p. 22). The Bishop of Chalons in Champagne was slain at Poitiers in 1350 (Fr p. 62). In 1361 "the archpriest Arnaut de Cervole, who was an expert and hardy knight" commanded a battalion of French in a battle against the Free Companies (Fr p. 75). The Canon de Robersac, closer to the time of the composition of "Sir Thopas" and therefore more likely to be known by Chaucer's audience, led part of the

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[87] Loomis, p. 488.

[88] Froissart, Chronicles, p. 357. Further references are included in the text.

English army against the castle of Fighiere in 1381, where he showed "the courage of a good knight . . . performing that day many noble deeds" (Fr p. 229). He was also involved in the taking of the town and castle of Benn (1382), the castle of La Courtisse, and the town of Jaffre. He had nothing to do with Flanders, and is unlikely to have had any more relevance to "Sir Thopas" than the provision of a warrior cardinal. Other historical analogues included Thomas, Bishop of London, who in 1383 was to go with John of Gaunt to gain John the crown of Castille, and the Bishop of Norwich, who led a "crusade" against the supporters of the anti-pope Clement VII of Avignon for Urban VI.

The Bishop of Norwich in his crusade decided first to retake Flanders from the French and proceeded to attack it, although the Flemish were Urbanites like himself. Amongst other places attacked was Poperinghe. At Dunkirk the Flemings were defeated and "By reason of this victory the English were so swollen with pride that they thought all Flanders was their own" (Fr p. 264). But when the French king came towards them with overwhelming numbers, they withdrew from Ypres to forts they had conquered. The Bishop and his men seem to have fought bravely enough, but their return to England, rather defeated than victorious, was pleasing to the Duke of Lancaster, whereas "The commons of England . . . blamed the bishop and his companions . . . declaring . . . they ought to have conquered all Flanders" (Fr p. 269). The Bishop had not awaited Sir William Beauchamp as King Richard commanded; he was therefore generally unpopular, an especially suitable target for Chaucer in the romances of "popes and cardinales". The vogue of warrior bishops, as well as the papal schism, are evidence of a breakdown in the "three estates" basic to the feudal system, and Chaucer by this apparently innocent aside may be proposing that clerics should attend to church matters and leave fighting to their lay relatives, the nobles.

Many mock poems have historical subjects who are burlesqued by the treatment that is thought suitable for them. Chaucer's contemporary audience, on hearing "Sir Thopas", undoubtedly would wonder who he was--as have many critics. Although various figures have been suggested as possible targets of Chaucer's ridicule,[89] the one on whom most attention has been lavished is Philip d'Arteveld.

He was born in Poperinghe;[90] his father Jaques had ousted the Earl of Flanders and lived as Lord of Flanders. It seems strange, however, that Froissart's account of the lives of Jaques and Philip d'Arteveld (probably not too dissimilar from accounts passing over the Channel directly from the Low Countries) shows little reason for the latter's being assumed the original of "Sir Thopas". Philip did not eschew battle; with five thousand men of Ghent he defeated the Earl of Flanders and forty thousand men at Brussels; he also

[89] Richard II (see below, p. 99), and Jaques d'Arteveld.

[90] J. M. Manly, "Sir Thopas: A Satire," Essays and Studies, 13 (1928), 52 *ff*., following L. Winstanley's edition of The Prioresses Tale and Sir Thopas (Cambridge, England: 1922). W. W. Lawrence, "Satire in Sir Thopas," PMLA, 50 (1935), disagrees.

captured many towns, and his final downfall against the French king was due to his leaving a good defensive position to attack the French rather than waiting for them to attack him.

Also, Philip was the godson of Philippa of Hainault, Edward III's queen. His father, Jaques, who was close to Edward, promised that when he died the Black Prince should become Duke of Flanders; he was godfather to John of Gaunt, and he lent money to Edward. Philip, in his embassy to Richard in 1383, asked for the return of the money as well as for military aid. This request was mocked by the courtiers and no help was sent; in any event it was unnecessary, as by the time Richard received the embassy Philip had died. Lawrence[91] and Norris[92] think that the crusade of the Bishop of Norwich was really the aid requested by Philip under the guise of aid for the Pope. Had Beauchamp led the crusade, it might have helped rather than hurt the Flemings. Because of the close ties between the d'Artevelds and the English royal family, it seems implausible that Chaucer would hold either of these particular individuals up to ridicule.

Lawrence reads "Lord he was of that contre" to refer to Flanders and not just to Poperinghe,[93] in contradiction to Manly, who finds the line amusing because of the

[91] Lawrence, 89.

[92] Dorothy MacBride Norris, "Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale and Flanders," PMLA, 48 (1933), 638.

[93] Lawrence, 82 n.

intimation that Sir Thopas was the bastard son of the Abbott-Lord of Poperinghe.[94] Finding no evidence that either of the d'Artevelds was intended as Chaucer's target, Lawrence concludes that neither was the original for "Sir Thopas". He admits the possibility of the Flemings' being a general target, whilst limiting his amusement to the proximity of the "fer contree". He states that the English would have been antagonistic to the French-supported Flemish nobility who defeated Philip, because England was at war with France at that time. He also intimates that the Bishop of Norwich's campaign to help the Flemish bourgeoisie displeased John of Gaunt because it delayed the enforcement of his claim to the throne of Castille.[95]

Flemish refugees were firmly established in England as weavers by the time of the Peasants' Revolt (1381). English fears that the Flemings were robbing native workers of a livelihood caused some of the immigrants to be killed in the uprising, an action calculated to dispose of their competition and to deter a further influx from Flanders (Fr pp. 214 ff.). Also killed were some of the Flemish whores, who had been banned from London by Richard II.[96] Chaucer, by making his

[94] Manly, Canterbury Tales, p. 65.

[95] Lawrence, 86-88.

[96] "Flemish women who profess and follow such shameful and dolorous life of common harlots we do by our command forbid . . . that any such women shall go about or lodge in the said city London . . . ." Riley, Memorials of London and London Life in the XIII, XIV and XV Centuries (London, 1868), p. 535. Quoted in W. O. Ross, "A Possible Significance of the name Thopas," MLN, 45 (1930), 174.

"hero" Flemish, could be alluding to the yeoman-like nature of the immigrants and, through the effeminacy of Sir Thopas, questioning the type of men who would permit their women to be renowned as harlots.

An alternative reading is that Chaucer is holding the true Duke of Flanders (dispossessed by Philip d'Arteveld) up to ridicule, for, ironically, the Duke's father was a man "ful free/ . . . of that contree" (ST 1911-12), because it was taken from him by Philip's father, and he was lord of Flanders "As it was Goddes grace" (ST 1913), only for those short periods when the King of France subjugated it for him.

In describing the death of Philip d'Arteveld at the battle of Rosebecque, Froissart comments:

> When the news of the defeat at Rosebecque reached England, the nobles said they were not sorry to hear it; for had the commonalty of Flanders been victorious over the King of France, the common people everywhere would have been so inflated with pride, that all gentlemen would have had cause to lament it.
> (p. 256)

The English nobles' reaction is no doubt due to the Peasants' Revolt, which had occurred the previous year. In France, too, in 1381, the lower orders refused to pay taxes levied for the continuation of the wars. The French rebellion was laid at the door of the Flemings,

> for the common people of France every where said publicly, that they [the men of Ghent] were good men who so valiantly maintained their liberties.
> (p. 228)

It would seem, therefore, that neither the Flemish peasants, bourgeoisie, or nobles were esteemed in England, and that by leaving the exact original of "Sir Thopas" in doubt, Chaucer was extending his audience, for each "estate" in England could comprehend its own particular target for the unchivalric knight.

Several critics note the presence of sexual imagery in "Sir Thopas"; some are content with the humour arising from the contrast between sexual referents such as variants of "pryking" and Thopas' being "chaast and no lechour", but others extend parallels to extremes. George Williams suggests that as "Thopas" was usually a woman's name and the gem was a protection against sensuality and "unchasteness" [sic], "the poem contains some sort of joke involving Sir Thopas' sexual peculiarities."[97] He concludes that Thopas is a homosexual as Edward II and Richard II were, and that "Thus alerted to the possibility of obscene implications in the poem, the reader may discern phallic or autoerotic or homosexual innuendoes throughout the poem."[98] He is correct, for if one searches

[97] Williams, p. 147. He rejects the possibility of John of Gaunt, who was born in Flanders, being the model for Sir Thopas because of Chaucer's praise for him elsewhere and because he had not been accused of effeminacy. He does not state where he gets his evidence that Richard II or Edward II were homosexuals, although Edward's homosexuality has been established. Had "Sir Thopas" been written around 1383 (cf. pp. 70-71, above), Richard's depiction as a coward because of his actions in 1381 during the Peasants' Revolt would be unlikely, although his appearance might have been somewhat effeminate, as he was only about sixteen. He would not then have had a beard to his waist. In the latter part of the 1390's, Richard might still have had a youthful figure and have gained the beard, but he does not have the charge of homosexuality laid against him elsewhere.

[98] Williams, p. 147.

diligently enough one can discover whatever one intends to find in a work; however, it does not mean that the author intended it, nor that it is there. Sir Thopas is depicted as effeminate in appearance, but this does not necessarily imply homosexuality. It could be, as Loomis suggests, that Chaucer is in fact burlesquing the David and Goliath story, perceiving "to the full the jocose effect of transferring the famous fel staf-slinge and making the giant chase with it the well armed 'Childe',"[99] with the contrast continuing in David's removing Saul's armour to fight the giant, whereas Thopas leaves to put it on. The description of Sir Thopas she considers similar to that given of David in Cursor Mundi and the Wyclif Bible.[100]

Williams puts forward an allegorical interpretation in which John of Gaunt is Olifaunt, whose manhood is asserted by the phallic symbolism of the "fel staf-slinge", while his three heads represent his three wives. The third wife, Katherine Swynford, is the queen of faery or "love land" from which Thopas (Richard II) is driven; his desire for an elf-queen is a reference to his marriage to the child Isabella, who is "no woman", while the conflict from which Thopas retreats represents John's marriage to Katherine, a union which was opposed by the court.[101]

The suggestion that Richard II is the target is

[99] Loomis, p. 531. See above, pp. 69-70.

[100] Loomis, "Sir Thopas and David and Goliath," MLN, 51 (1936), 313.

[101] Williams, pp. 150-151.

unlikely. Had "Sir Thopas" been written with this allegory in mind it would not have pleased the court factions of either Richard or Gaunt, because Richard would be represented as a coward in fear of his uncle, and Gaunt would be a man ruled by his wives. If Richard were indeed the target, which he is not, it would be more likely that the three-headed giant represented his three uncles, and the "maw" he would pierce would be that of the uncle who most opposed him, the Duke of Gloucester, whom he killed. Further, as Thopas bears a shield with the depiction of a boar's head in this allegory, it should be he who is the husband of Katherine Swynford. This reading would also suggest that Richard had been seeking Katherine's favours, but why would a homosexual be seeking the love of a woman? At the probable time of writing of "Sir Thopas" Richard was married to Anne of Bohemia and the alliance with Isabella of France was out of the question. Williams says the personal allegory is unlikely, but he does present it, along with the theory that Chaucer was giving Harry "Som deyntee thyng" (1901) and that Harry finally saw the homosexuality, to which he reacted violently, for his "intelligence and his manliness have been insulted by a 'popet'"[102]-- which seems to imply that Chaucer, too, is a homosexual. Knowlton has a simpler opinion: "Sir Thopas" is a joke that is appreciated by only "the subtler pilgrims . . . who enact . . . a little comedy of which many of their comrades are unconscious."[103] The Host, who puts a sudden end to the

[102] Williams, p. 149.

[103] Knowlton, 90-91.

story, does not realize he has got what he asked for, "a tale of myrthe . . . Som deyntee thyng." Like many another person, he cannot appreciate the merits of a burlesque of literature.

Although the minstrel calls to attention in "Sir Thopas" prepare the reader for Harry Bailly's truncation of the tale, its end comes suddenly, forcing one to wonder why Chaucer terminated it so abruptly. Harry gives two reasons: the rhyme is "drasty" and the tale does "noght elles but despendest tyme" (2121). Both are specious. The rhyme is a virtuoso performance, and more happens to Sir Thopas than happens to many knights in twice as many lines. Root's suggestion that "one might easily read it through in a collection of romances without suspecting its good faith"[104] contains the key to the sudden ending. "Sir Thopas" is stopped without apparent cause to make the reader re-evaluate the poem, to force its burlesque nature on his attention, in case in his first reading he had missed the joke; for to discover the speciousness of Harry's objections, the poem must be read a second time.

In "Sir Thopas", Chaucer-the-pilgrim is testing Harry's abilities as a critic because he is the self-appointed judge of the tales. Gaylord suggests that Harry wants the storyteller to catch and hold the audience's attention, to give variation in types of story and to depict the Host himself or others. He declares:

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[104] R. K. Root, _The_ _Poetry_ _of_ _Chaucer_ (New York: Peter Smith, 1950), p. 20.

> What one finds in the links. . . . is a discussion of the tales combined with an ostentatious attempt to arrange their order.[105]

From Chaucer Harry requests some "deyntee thyng", which he gets but is unfortunately unable to appreciate. Perhaps he interrupts Chaucer-the-pilgrim's tale because he finally understands that he is being given a tale of mirth at his own expense, and he dislikes being the butt of a joke shared by Chaucer with some of the other pilgrims.[106] Harry, as judge of the tales, comments on each, and it is possible that Chaucer is holding Harry's pretensions as critic up to ridicule in extension of the jokes contained in the poem itself. Williams' idea that Harry stopped the poem because he suddenly perceived its homosexual nature (if it exists) would also support this explanation, as does the view that Chaucer intended to manoeuvre Harry into approving a tale in which a husband accepts his wife's advice.[107]

In "Sir Thopas" Chaucer could be exposing elements from generally popular romances for consideration as evocations of contemporary taste, questioning how they reflect on the audience and author and how improvements may be made. Harry as Chaucer's tool could then stop "Sir Thopas" to prophesy the form which was to be most popular for telling stories in the future, to indicate that prose would replace verse as the medium for extended works.

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[105] A. T. Gaylord, "Sentence and Solaas in Fragment VII of the Canterbury Tales: Harry Bailly as Horseback Editor," PMLA, 82 (1967), 226.

[106] See Knowlton, p. 101 above.

[107] Lumiansky, p. 85. Lumiansky's is the best discussion of Harry as a literary critic with references to all the Canterbury Tales to show the disparity between Harry's real ability and his self-concept.

The Man of Law has a low opinion of Chaucer as a versifier, an opinion he shares with Harry, who five times in nine lines when "stynting" Chaucer-the-pilgrim of his tale decries his ability with rhyme.[108] Elsewhere Chaucer's repetition of a word or its synonyms signals some point that may otherwise be overlooked.[109]

Wigfall Green states, "It is not improbable that Chaucer was demonstrating his virtuosity and even experimenting in verse forms."[110] He finds "in addition to the rhyme royal of the prologue and the decasyllabic verse or heroic couplet of the epilogue only seven varieties of rhyme are used"[111] and considers that the introduction of the verse of one foot required great skill. Burrow suggests that "Sir Thopas" consists of "three fits" whose structure is made of eighteen, nine and four and one-half stanzas respectively where the two completed fits exhibit "the same basic pattern: each begins with a string of regular or common stanzas and ends with a burst of inventive variation."[112] For Baugh, the basic verse form is that known as romance sixes, six-line stanzas rhyming aabaab or aabccb, often combined in pairs to form a stanza of twelve lines.[113] Kolbing, however, thinks there are eight stanza forms,[114] whereas Manly says all the forms are variations of aabccb with *a* and *c* verses having four stresses to the three of *b* lines.[115] Owen considers "the rhyme reflects on the smallest scale the effects of anti-climax and non-sequitur that the narrative line is repeatedly creating,"[116] while Everett applauds Chaucer's recognition "of the emphatic quality of the tail-rhyme" into which "he puts some of his most successful anticlimaxes," and "the bathetic slowing down of pace which comes with the single stressed line."[117]

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[108] Knowlton (90 ff.) considers lines 47-48 of the "Man of Law's Tale"'s prologue, "Chaucer . . . kan but lewedly/ On metres and on rymyng craftily," a challenge which Chaucer accepts in "Sir Thopas", citing the use of "rym" and its variants as supportive evidence. Harry's weariness of Chaucer's "verray lewednesse" seems to reinforce Knowlton's argument because of its parallelism to "kan but lewedly".

[109] For example, "pryking" in "Sir Thopas" emphasizing the sexuality of Thopas, who by his name should be chaste, and his lack of sexual performance which correlates with his other absence of achievement; here Chaucer seems to beg the audience's examination of his stanzas. Critics have not disappointed him.

[110] Green, 3.

[111] Ibid., 5. (Italics mine.)

All the above opinions have arguable merits; it is difficult to decide where a variation of a form ceases and a new stanza form begins, but however many the forms, they are admirably mingled; the verse, excepting for the single-foot

[112] J. A. Burrow, "Sir Thopas: An Agony in Three Fits," *RES* (New Series), 22 (1971), 57.

[113] A. C. Baugh, *Geoffrey Chaucer: Major Poetry* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1963), p. 347.

[114] *Kölbing*, "Zu Chaucer's Sir Thopas".

[115] J. M. Manly, "The Stanza Forms of Sir Thopas," *MP*, 8 (1910-11), 144.

[116] C. Owen, Jr., "Thy Drasty Rymyng," *SP*, 63 (1966), 539.

[117] D. Everett, "Chaucer's Good Ear," *RES*, 23 (1947), 204. (Also in *Essays*, ed. P. Kean.)

lines and the penultimate stanza, flows smoothly. As Owen says,

> all the lines are end-stopped; the syntax reinforces the inherent qualities of the form. The result is a kind of incantatory formality, that slows down the rhythmic elements and absorbs irregularities.[118]

The last full stanza before Harry stopped "Sir Thopas", although apparently correct, is a breakdown of the previous careful versification,[119] and it is easy to understand Harry's wishing such rhymes to the devil. As the first stanza had more feminine rhymes, it is not their presence alone that makes it awkward, nor is it the use of strong masculine rhyme in the tail-rhyme. The lack of any meaningful information and the pervasive irony have no bearing on the awkwardness of the verse form. Elsewhere in "Sir Thopas" Chaucer used a feminine rhyme followed by two masculine rhymes without producing the discord evident in the first three lines of this penultimate stanza. The problem seems to arise from the attempt to rhyme "auntrous" with "hous" and "wonger" with "dextrer", the r's of the final syllables of "auntrous" and "dextrer" preventing a proper rhyme--an error a non-native speaker of English might fall into, but not Chaucer. The

[118] Owen, 540.

[119] Owen suggests, "The first fit of twenty-seven stanzas falls naturally into three divisions of nine each. . . . In the first and the third sections there is no repetition of rhyme sound. In the second section . . . there are four repetitions of rhyme . . . and every one of the stanzas contains at least one rhyme from one of the other sections. . . . In the last section . . . rhymes, though not repeated within the section, draw equally on each of the other two with seven repeated from each, three of the seven being common to both" (542).

stanza with its careful error must have been written to give Harry an immediate excuse to break off "Sir Thopas", providing truly "drasty" rhymes such as the audience would not wish to hear in later stanzas.

Many verses have a bathetic lowering in the third and/or sixth line. The first stanza with a line of one foot does not have this third-line anticlimax; this is saved for the single foot where Thopas' declaration that there is no fit mate for him "in this world" is limited to "towne". The other verses of a single foot also serve to bathetically lower the stanza but without the logic of the first stanza containing this feature. Most single-foot verses are tagged onto the previous idea; "So wilde" (1993) seems to add nothing to the poem, although it just barely might cause the reader to review his idea of fairyland or remind him of the nature of the "wilde best" some seven stanzas earlier. It does in fact raise his expectation of the dangers that may threaten Sir Thopas, so that the last line of the stanza (only found in some versions and a possible scribal addition) may gain in bathetic effect. The third single-foot verse merely tells us how Olifaunt intends to slay Thopas' horse, while the fourth constitutes the part of Thopas' boast concerning what he intends to do to the giant, and its final appearance is in the form of a standard minstrel tag. Chaucer is undoubtedly showing his skill in the various ways he contrives to use the single-footed line, but its use is disruptive to the even tenor of his verses and can only have been inserted to show his dislike of a feature which occurs in only two poems prior to his use of it--the Auchinleck Manuscript's "Sir Tristrem" and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

The form of the first stanza to use the single foot is a romance six split by the short line, aabcddc, while the others have a normal romance six, the single-foot line which is followed by another three verses, basically aabaabcaac.

The single foot as used in the alliterative Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is not disruptive, as it is in the tail rhyme of "Sir Thopas"; it continues the sense of the sentence of which it is a part without effort or the semi-repetition it is later forced into in the "Christis Kirk" tradition. The "Christis Kirk" use of the single-foot line may come from the Auchinleck "Tristrem" where the poet does use the single-foot verse to slow down the poem and sometimes to repeat, in near parallel form, an idea expressed in an earlier line. The verse form, abababab cad, begs to be parodied, but Chaucer ignores the obtrusive short three-stressed line with its partial use of alliteration, so that it is unlikely that he was parodying "Tristrem", nor is it probable that Gawain is a target, leaving the conclusion that he is just showing his versatility with rhyme, or showing that even poor tail-rhyme may be made worse.

All in all, there are six stanza forms (or, if the two versions of the romance six are taken as one form, five):

| | |
|---|---|
| Stanzas 1-13, 19-22, 25, 28 | aab aab |
| Stanza 14 | aabc bbc |

| | |
|---|---|
| Stanzas 15-16 | aab aab caac |
| Stanza 17 | aab ccb dccd |
| Stanza 27 | aab ccb bddb |
| Stanzas 18, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30 (and apparently 31) | aab ccb |

while there are no twelve-line stanzas, maugré Baugh.[120]

In "Sir Thopas" Chaucer laughs at contemporary literary and social taste. Popular romances, some of which he probably enjoyed, are exhibited for his audience's critical consideration. Through parody and the insertion of an unworthy hero into a typical romance setting, he mocks particular romances and the failings of the genre. He exactly imitates the matter and form of minstrels who, despite their lack of knowledge of courts and courtly habits, wrote to appease the curiosity of peasant and burgher. Chaucer, like many other poets, popularizes courtly activities to the level of a jongleur's audience, telling them that nobles, just like peasants, hunt, hawk, wrestle and use bows and arrows. By humourous exposure of the faults of romance, Chaucer asks his audience how indicative are such stories of their lives and appreciative ability, and what can be done to improve literary content and style. Harry Bailly suggests the use of prose, while by omitting from his later poems such features as catalogues (sometimes used to excess in his earlier works), Chaucer provides another answer.

The motivation for much of the action of "Sir Thopas"

[120] Unless he is concerned with general usage; the twelve-line form is found in Dunbar's "Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis". See below, p. 122.

is that knight's apparently ridiculous courtly love for the fair unknown. This love, along with that part of the tradition which has the hero forever swooning, Chaucer shows as the affectations they are, as traits to be laughed at and not copied by truly noble men. As in other tales, particularly that of the Wife of Bath, he espouses the ideal of courtly love in marriage rather than adulterous love.[121] It is unlikely that in "Sir Thopas" Chaucer is suggesting that knights should be carnal; however, with love motivating his hero, it is probable that he had the love lyrics in mind whilst writing the burlesque, and several parallels may be found between his tale and lyrics with their affected postures, appeals for "mercy", lovers' complaints, and sickness. These traits passed into the romances and also mirrored contemporary habits, not being merely literary devices, for love-sickness as described in romances and lyrics is to be found similarly described in medical works.[122]

Chaucer also suggests that authors of Lapidaries should be more empirical. Through his "Treatise on the Astrolabe" he showed his interest in science, and it seems unlikely that he would not have known of the supposed virtues of the stones to which he alluded in "Sir Thopas". It seems just as unlikely that he did not test the stones on at least a superficial level by taking a charbocle to light his way at night and subsequently decided to ridicule both the lapidaries and those who believed in them.

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[121] In "The Miller's Tale" the carpenter is repaid for his folly in marrying Alisoun in a September-May relationship, and is much more fortunate than Guy of Hamtoun, who lost his life because of a similar alliance of age and youth. In the "Reeve's Tale" the Miller's cuckoldry arises through his own concupiscence.

[122] Arnoldus of Villanova's "De amore heroico" and "De parte operative" in his collected works published 1528-30; fourteenth-century Bernard cf Gordon's Lilium Medicinæ , ed. Lyons, 1574; cited in D. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: University Press, 1962), pp. 457-460.

As for appearances, Chaucer hardly glances at contemporary fashions; he mentions the whitening of complexions and hints at the expense of acquiring clothes from parts of Europe and the East. He makes no mention of the length of the shoes' toes, which he could easily have done with the names "cracowes" or "poleynes"; neither does he mention Thopas' sleeve length nor that his hose are parti-coloured. Chaucer's acceptance of, and even liking for, current civilian styles, as shown in his description of the Squire, may therefore be presumed. The superabundance of protective armour, when contrasted with the sparsity of recreational wear (although not atypical of romance) emphasizes the middle classes' desire to have everything correct and even more their fear of harm, which would be greater for those not brought up in the practice of martial arts.

Only if a knight lacked gentilesse might he be a target for "Sir Thopas", which seems to be an attack not on chivalric practice nor the nobility but on pseudo-chivalry. The Franklin tells the Squire he wishes his son would "lerne gentilesse aright" and be "a man of swich discrecioun" as the noble youth. This he desires more than twenty pound worth of land. As knighthoods were given at this time to the owners of land valued at £40, the implication is that wealth is only part of nobility, that deeds and descent are more important. It is the unworthy knight, the bourgeois without the background, the "Bradford millionaire" of the Middle Ages, that Chaucer ridicules. He gently leads his audience to a realization that they might be being laughed at, for his subject is not an English yeoman or burgher who has attained knighthood. The hero is a Fleming, one of those "foreigners" who think themselves the equal not only of knights, as shown by their ousting their duke and fighting the French, but, by presuming on honorary connections with the English royal family,[123] of Englishmen themselves. Chaucer hints at the British distrust of foreigners through Thopas' Flemish nationality and, because of the notoriety of the Flemish bourgeois in usurping the privileges of nobility, could be referring indirectly to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England which had as a rallying cry John Ball's

> When Adam dolve and Eve span
> Who was then the gentleman?

"Sir Thopas" could then be showing that a peasant by any other name still smells of compost, and that Thopas, a member of the lower class, becomes not upper-class but ridiculous if put into a noble setting.[124] The parvenu knight, not being brought up in a court, would know only the outward appearance of knighthood and not the symbolism of each item of armour and weapon. Much of his information would come from the romances, many of which were written by poets having little knowledge of courtly life and the traditions of the upper classes.[125] Inclusion of too many new knights could cause the old system to collapse, and Chaucer could be warning the court of this possibility in "Sir Thopas", saying that since society is allowing these people to be knights, surely some course of instruction should be given them so that they might support the system and not destroy it. The "estates" should be maintained by each person attending to his own business. The function of knights was the protection of the church and peasant; churchmen were to take care of the spiritual needs of society so that all could achieve heaven, whilst the third estate should support those who enabled it to function safely and those who sought to bring them to eternal joy.[126]

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[123] If one of the d'Artevelds was considered the original of "Sir Thopas"; see above, pp. 95 ff.

[124] For a parallel situation, see the opening part of "The Taming of the Shrew".

In short, Chaucer uses stereotyped romance features--typical opening, descriptions, tags, catalogues, abilities and adventures of the hero--within the confines of a limited plot containing due reference to courtly love and the marvelous through a fairy mistress and a giant, to construct a mock romance which even the more vulgar members of his audience decry. Despite Harry's disapprobation, Chaucer's verse is good but is so presented as to show all the flaws common to romance. "Sir Thopas" is a parody quoting from many recognizable works and, as the matter of both courtly love and knight-errantry is debased by the manner of presentation, it is a travesty.

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[125] Almost incidentally, Chaucer points at lower and middle class desires for information about their betters as a weakness.

[126] See Piers Plowman, passus 7, for a similar request.

As a social burlesque "Sir Thopas" tilts at bourgeois who are knights through wealth, not ability or descent, while it continues Chaucer's plea that true nobility is shown only by performance. Some contemporary practices are ridiculed, but fewer than one might expect, extravagance in clothing and the use of makeup alone being delineated.

The poem is able to support several allegorical interpretations involving Richard II and his uncles, besides that historical reading concerning the d'Artevelds. It could also contain a reference to the Peasants' Revolt, the warlike behaviour of churchmen, and the schism in the Church. Sexual imagery in the poem is limited and does not lead to any valid interpretation, being used merely to raise our expectations so that they may be disappointed, as they are also in the giant-fight incident.

The tale is well constructed, presenting all the typical features in far fewer lines than it seems to have. Its apparently greater length is produced by a doubling of incidents and phrases so that when the reader thinks he has read something before, he probably has. As usual with Chaucer the work has to be read on several levels. "Sir Thopas", besides its obvious targets of romance and bourgeois knighthood, could also be an answer to the Man of Law's slur on Chaucer's ability as a versifier, or a joke at Harry Bailly's assumption of critical ability. From all the evidence it must be concluded that "Sir Thopas" is the fullest, tightest burlesque in medieval literature.

## CHAPTER III
## THE SCOTS BURLESQUES

Burlesques in the Scots tongue, which is conceded to be a dialect of English, were normally written for a noble audience. Two followers of Chaucer--William Dunbar, a priest of James IV's court, and Sir David Lindesay, tutor to the young James V, later his Lyon King at Arms--were clearly courtiers. Nothing is known of Alexander Scott, whose work too was intended for a court audience. The only burlesque romance which might have had universal appeal is "King Berdok", which is easier to read than the other works, partly because of the poet's use of more Southern forms. Its ascription to an anonymous Scots author is largely due to its inclusion in the Bannatyne Manuscript, although its citing of one of Berdok's enemies as the king of the Picts suggests it was written south of the border in Northumberland or Durham. "Berdok", too, is different from the noble Scots works in its avoidance of crude humour and its greater technical excellence.

Dunbar sought preferment in the church throughout his time at court; even a small benefice would have satisfied him.[1]

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[1] See "Of Discretioun in Geving", "Of Discretioun in Taking", "Schir, ȝit remembir as of befoir", "Quhome to sall I complene my wo", "Quhen mony Benefices Vakit", "To the King", "The Petition of the Gray Horse", and "Of the Warldis Instabilitie".

As he was given none, he remained at court where he had to keep asking for money.[2] When not requesting money or preferment he was, as was Lindesay after him, largely an occasional poet, a kind of Poet Laureate writing for such events as James' marriage to Margaret, an English princess. His best works in the aureate style used for such occasions were "The Thistle and the Rose" and "The Goldyn Targe". However, Dunbar was also close to the people, as the entire court seems to have been despite their interest in chivalry, and one finds the coarse mixed with the ideal in such burlesque works as "The Turnament between the Tailyour and the Sowtar"[3] and "The Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo".[4] "The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis",[5] to which a brief Highland pageant and "The Turnament" are joined, is regarded as his masterpiece. The framework within which the three are presented is that of a dream vision, a favourite form of Dunbar.[6] "The Tua Mariit Wemen" is a travesty of the confession type of courtly love poem, giving a conventional picture of ladies in their "bower of bliss" whose language and subject of debate are, however, more suited to Dunbar's tradesmen's wives or women like the Wife of Bath. "The Testament of Mr. Andro Kennedy" is another burlesque work, lacking the coarseness and the romance elements of "The Turnament" and "The Tua Mariit Wemen". "Of ane Blak-Moir"[7] is not a burlesque but a comic occasional poem. In 1505 (according to Pittiscottie[8]) or in 1507 with a repeat in 1508 (according to the Treasurer's Accounts[9]), there was a burlesque tournament of the Black (or wild) Knight and the Black Lady. James himself, supposedly incognito, was the Black Knight, while the Black Lady--Helen More, a negress--was the prize. Small says that at the start of the tournament Helen was drawn in a chariot through a mimic scene and was received by a troop of wild men dressed in goat skins and wearing hartshorns.[10] After the King won the tourney and the Black Lady, which victory was only to be expected were the losers indeed to "cum behind and kiss hir hippis" (23), Dunbar was commanded to commemorate the event. The work itself is not one of Dunbar's best and contains little chivalric content; lines 16-17

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[2] See "Quhome to sall I complene my wo", "Sanct Saluator! send siluer sorrow", "Dunbar's Remonstrance", "Of Content", "Meditatioun in Wyntir", "My Lordis of Chacker, pleis ȝow to heir", and "Welcome to the Lord Treasurer".

[3] Also referred to as "The Turnament". Quotations are from the J. Small edition, The Poems of William Dunbar (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1893). Also consulted were: H. B. Baildon, The Poems of William Dunbar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907); The Bannatyne Manuscripts, ed. W. Tod Ritchie (Edinburgh: S. T. S., 1930); The Maitland Folio Manuscript, ed. W. A. Craigie (Edinburgh: S. T. S., 1919).

[4] Afterwards referred to as "The Tua Mariit Wemen". Texts consulted are as above, note 3.

[5] Afterwards referred to as "The Dance". Texts consulted are as above, note 3.

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[6] See "The Goldyn Targe", "Devorit with Dreme", "How Dunbar was desyred to be ane Freir", "The Feinȝeit Freir of Tungland", "This nycht in my sleip I wes agast", "Lucina Schynyng in silence of the nicht", "The Thistle and the Rose", "Ane Ballat of the Passioun of Christ", and "The Dream".

[7] See texts referred to in note 3.

[8] Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, The Historie & Cronicles of Scotland, ed. A. J. G. MacKay, III (Edinburgh: Blackwood [for S. T. S.], 1911), p. 234. Otherwise referred to as Pitscotties Cronicles or The Pittiscottie Chronicles.

[9] Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, ed. Sir James Balfour Paul (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1900), June 20, 1507 (Vol. III, pp. 393-7); May 31, 1508 (Vol. IV, pp. 119-122). Otherwise referred to as the Treasurer's Accounts.

> Quhai for hir saik, with speir and scheld,
> Preiffis maist mychtelye in the feld

and lines 21-22

> And quhai in fedle receawes schame
> And tynis thair his knychtlie name [11]

are the only ones connected with knightly activities. Dunbar's treatment of the occasion is amusing, but as the style, the characters, the language and the matter are all in keeping with the event, it is not a burlesque.

Dunbar admired Chaucer mainly because of his command of rhetoric. In many of his works Dunbar has no debt to pay to his master. "Of Sir Thomas Norny",[12] however, is modeled on "Sir Thopas", although its satirical purpose is more limited, for it is not burlesquing many works, fashions and people but only Sir Thomas Norny (the King's fool), Curry (another fool), and Quintayne, a rival poet. Elizabeth Roth Eddy, noting deviations from Middle Scots into Southern forms, suggests that Dunbar might be parodying Southern taste, reminding listeners of "Sir Thopas" itself, or both. The structure of the two poems may be readily compared:[13]

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[10] Small, introduction to Poems, I, p. cii.

[11] Citations from "Of ane Black-Moir" are to Small, II.

[12] All citations are to Small, Poems, II; the Bannatyne and Maitland Folio Manuscripts were also consulted. With regard to the spelling of Norny I am following the Treasurer's Accounts and other historical sources.

| | "Sir Thomas Norny" | "Sir Thopas" |
|---|---|---|
| Parentage of the hero | 1-6 | 1911-13 |
| How he compares with other knights | 7-9 | 1995-96 |
| His wrestling ability | 22-23 | 1930-31 |
| How he compares with specific heroes of romance | 25-37 | 2087-90 |
| His chastity | 41-42 | 1935 |
| His adventures | 31-33 | 1905-06<br>1997-2022<br>2099 |

Both poems use tail rhyme, although "Norny" does not use the double tail of "Sir Thopas". Dunbar's verse form is consistently rime couée, a six-line stave rhyming aab ccb, in contrast to the variety of forms based on an aab aab rhyme scheme, utilized by Chaucer.

There is little to tell that this is not a genuine romance in the first two stanzas: the third stanza, however, undercuts them with Sir Thomas' having annoyed many puny creatures or ghosts and having done a deed that "na man kennis". The fourth stanza praises him, only to let him fall with the anticlimactic "He knawis gif this be leiss" of the last line: a pattern which is followed in the sixth stanza, while the fifth, with its comparisons with knightly champions, has him excelling at a plebeian sport. With the seventh, eighth, and ninth stanzas there is apparently a sudden change in attitude, for Dunbar now decries "Quhentyne" for his low opinion of Norny and says that Norny is superior to Curry (another "fool").

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[13] The idea for this comparison was obtained from Elizabeth Roth Eddy's "Sir Thomas Norny: Romance Parody in Chaucer and Dunbar," RES (New Series), 22 (1971), 401-409. Also see F. Snyder, "Sir Thomas Norny and Sir Thopas", MLN, 25 (1910), 78-80.

The poem's purpose may in fact be found in these last verses, for Quintayne was a rival poet to Dunbar just as Curry was a rival fool to Norny. Dunbar possibly disliked Norny's being knighted, although such a grotesquerie, akin to the knighting of a loin of beef, should have been to his taste. The early part of the poem makes the praise of Norny in the seventh stanza, "This wyse and worthie knycht", ironic and maintains Norny as Dunbar's target, at the same time pouring more contempt on Quintayne and Curry. Baxter suggests that "Sir Thomas was not a court jester at all, but a braggart whom Dunbar skilfully ridiculed as *Miles Gloriosus* and whom Quintayne would like to see in motley,"[14] and adds that the gifts of clothing to Norny, mentioned in the *Treasurer's Accounts*, "do not suggest the special garb of the jester."[15] It is possible that courtiers sometimes wore yellow hose,[16] but as one Scottish jester, Bute, used to dress as a doctor, the fools at the Scottish Court may have been indistinguishable from the knights. The *Treasurer's Accounts*, however, show an entry for March 24, 1512 which renders Baxter's thesis untenable: "Item, to Thomas Norny, fule, in elimose at his passage

[14] J. W. Baxter, *William Dunbar* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1952), p. 129.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Treasurer's Accounts* for April 5, 1508 (Vol. IV).

to Sanct James iiij Franch Crounis."[17] In any event, whether or not Norny is a fool, the targets remain the same; Sir Thomas is still superior to Curry, and Quintayne is still a sot for calling Norny a full chamber-pot.

Obviously its length (54 lines) precludes the sense of the interminable that Chaucer achieves in "Sir Thopas" and prevents Dunbar from experimenting with the verse forms. However, even had the work been longer, Dunbar probably would not have varied his stanza. "Of Sir Thomas Norny" is a social burlesque, a mock poem using an existing burlesque structure. Dunbar was not burlesquing the romances of price; he was merely using a form suited to his ends. His readers or listeners were probably already aware of "Sir Thopas", and the insertion of Norny into the framework of that poem would only increase the appreciation of the audience. As soon as they heard the title, or--if no title were given--as soon as Norny's name was mentioned in the second line, they would expect the poem to be amusing and to have some bite. Dunbar does not let them down, for he satirizes "Sir Thomas", holds Quintayne's opinions up to ridicule, and shames Curry.

Earlier "The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis", the untitled pageant, and "The Turnament" were mentioned as being within the same dream vision.[18] They have the same stanzaic form, a composite of that used in "Of Sir Thomas Norny", made by coupling two stanzas together--aab ccb ddb eeb-- with the

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[17] Treasurer's Accounts for 1507-1513.

[18] See above, pp. 117-118.

*b* rhyme giving unity. It is probable that the three poems, of which "The Turnament" is the only part containing chivalric elements, are accounts of actual Scots burlesque celebrations of the type common for Shrove Tuesday during the Middle Ages.[19]

Tom Scott, after much consideration, concluded the year of the supposed dream vision (from internal evidence and knowledge of the days or dates in particular years) to be 1496 or 1507.[20] If the latter date were true, then the many tournaments that James IV held between the above years could have provided material for the burlesque "Turnament".[21] We are told in "Of Sir Thomas Norny" that Curry defiled two saddles; one of these occasions could be the source for "The tailȝeour that wes nocht weill sittin,/ He left his sadill all beschittin" ("Turnament" 70-71).

Just as tournaments in romances[22] and in real life[23] were proclaimed long before they took place, so the "Turnament" "lang befoir in hell wes cryid" (2). The lack of worthy men accompanying the Sowtar, and Dunbar's use of derisive names for tailors, ensure that the conveyance of the two champions to the field does not attain the level it would have had in a true romance. Even though the Tailor has "His baner born . . . befoir" (13), it is not a knightly banner but a hodgepodge patchwork of pieces of cloth stolen from "ane hundreth scoir" different bolts (14). The banner of the Sowtar, too, represents his trade; it is tanned leather embellished with some depiction of St. Crispin, the patron saint of cobblers. The unknightly nature of the champions continues in their reaction to seeing one another; the Tailor "fartis lyk ony thunner" (35) and the Sowtar sweats so that "betuix the harness plaitis/ The vly birstit out" (47-48). The Sowtar spews out his dinner before receiving knighthood and then brings up "ane quart of blek" (59) or boot polish. When they go to the barriers, their terror is obvious to all the onlookers; the ambiguous wording of the poem leaves it in doubt as to whether the Tailor is struck to the ground or falls off his horse in fear or through incompetence; while the Sowtar's horse, frightened by the rattle of harness, is shown to be ignoble and bolts toward Satan. The Devil, fearing another drenching with vomit, "Baith horss and man . . . straik till eird" (86), but this chivalrically phrased action is performed not with a lance but a fart. Having thus shown their "class", both Tailor and Sowtar are deprived of knighthood and driven into a "dungeoun" which is not, however, as deep as the pit into which the Highland piper was cast to end the "padȝane".

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[19] See above, p. 32, and below, p. 125, n. 24; compare also Brueghel's "Battle between Carnival and Lent".

[20] Tom Scott, *Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), p. 229.

[21] See the *Treasurer's Accounts* for these years. Baxter plumps for 1506-7 (pp. 154-6). Until 1600 the Scots year began on March 25.

[22] See "The Knight's Tale", 2565 *ff.*; the tournament at Aumbeforce in *Beues*, A, 3765 *ff.*; the tournament for the daughter of the German Emperor in *Guy*, Caius, 793 *ff.*; "Launfal", 434 *ff.*

[23] See Small, *Poems*, III, p. 200; Froissart, p. 560; C. Rogers, *Social Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1884), pp. 1495-96; *Treasurer's Accounts*, for the jousts in honour of Perkyn Warbeck at Edinburgh.

Throughout the poem Dunbar uses lines which would not be out of place in any romance: "The barress wes maid boun" (6); "baith with speir and scheild,/ Convoyit wes vnto the feild" (7-8); "His baner born wes him befoir" (13); "For, quhill the Greik sie flowis and ebbis" (17); "come furth and maid hym knycht,/ Na ferly thocht his hart wes licht,/ That to sic honor grew" (22-24); "to the feild him drest,/ He wes convoyid out of the west,/ As ane defender stout" (37-39); "Vnto the feild he socht" (63); "Thay spurrit thair horss on adir syd,/ Syn thay attour the grund cowd glyd,/ Than thame togidder brocht" (67-69); "So stern he wes in steill" (81); "Baith horss and man he straik till eird" (86); "Now haif I quitt the" (88).

The structure is that of practically any literary tournament: the combatants are led in procession to the field where they receive knighthood before fighting. Instead of gaining honour, they lose it and, instead of having a feast after the jousts, they are punished. The lack of a feast would be commensurate with the "Fastern's eve" setting, especially if the mock tournament were the final event, coming up to midnight when the sombreness of Lent started with the arrival of Ash Wednesday.[24]

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[24] D. Laing, in The Poems of William Dunbar (Edinburgh: Ballantyne & Co., 1834), p. 257, says that at Heidelberg on Shrove Tuesday there was a procession in which

> come in the Seven Deadly Sinnes all of them chained and driven forward by a dragon, who continually spet fire.

Medieval paintings of Shrove Tuesday festivities show both mock tournaments and processions of the Seven Deadly Sins.

In the Treasurer's Accounts for October 24, 1502, there appears "Item, to the heraldis, for thair composicioun of the eschet of the barres, quhen Cristofer Tailȝour faucht vj £ xiij s iiii d."[25] It is possible that Dunbar was recalling this event when he wrote "The Tournament". A "Cristofer" without any surname, however, is mentioned in the Accounts as competing in tourneys in 1502, 1504 and 1507; it seems just as possible that this much-fought man was Cristofer Tailȝour as that Cristofer Tailȝour was he who fouled his saddle in Dunbar's poem. It could be that the three are the same, with Cristofer a kind of fool who took to "justing", possibly in some burlesque encounters used as a foil to the true knightly exercise of arms.[25] Cristofer is not mentioned after 1507 and could have "mensweir" arms then; this, if true, would argue for the dating of the poem as the Shrove Tuesday of 1506-07.

That the object of the burlesque was to ridicule the pretensions of tradesmen to upper-class activities is clear. The Sowtars and the Tailors seemed to be especial targets for sneers but were probably representative of the other trades as well. The Chapmen of Stirling were given the right to one knightly activity, "running at the ring," in which a suspended ring was to be taken on the lance whilst riding full tilt. It is possible that James as part of his tournament decided to humble the trades envious of this right by allowing two of their representatives to compete.

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[25] Treasurer's Accounts, Vol. III.

[26] Ibid., p. cvi, for Shrove Tuesday, 1504-5 Tournament. Battle axes were only of "tree", i. e., clubs. For the 16th of February, 1505-06: "Item, this day, for speris to justing, agane Fasteringis evin, and for tua bowstringis tane at Johne Mayn v £ x s. Item, to Robert, cuttellar for vj lang suordis and sex schort swordis for justing and tournaying and for the bar; ilk pece x s. Summa vj £ . Item, for xij spere hedis for justing xij s. Item, for vyrales and dyamandis for justing xij s. Item, for tua batall axes of tree x s." See pp. 182-183.

The ideals of chivalry were not outdated, but due to increased utilization of guns, cavalry became largely superfluous in war.[27] Chivalric practice remained important only for trial by arms or for entertainment. As sport, jousting was an affectation and, because of its dangers, a valid target for ridicule. "The Turnament", unlike "The Tournament of Tottenham", does not seem to have been written for an eclectic group; therefore the burlesque of the tradesmen would have been the only thing registered by the noble audience. Dunbar, by using coarse elements, prevents the sowtars and tailors from enjoying the burlesque as they might, had the poet only shown the champions as incompetent. The crudity of the befouling and vomiting almost renders the poem a satire rather than the more gentle burlesque. The justified indignation of the tradesmen gets no apology, however, for the "Amendis"[28] Dunbar makes throws even more scorn on them. Scott considers their customers to be ridiculed also,[29] although if men did not go to the cobblers and tailors to be made "semely for to se", they would of necessity continue to frequent them for utilitarian clothing, and the tradesmen would still have had the pretensions demonstrated in "The Turnament". The nobles would consider their use of tailor and cobbler normal, not luxurious; they would be aware only of the pride inherent in the tradesmen's taking God's failure, "ane misfassonit man . . . [to] fassoun him bettir be sic thre" (25, 27) so that they might sit "Nixt God, grittest in dignitie" (7). In this arrogation the courtiers would recognize a reflection of the merchants' earthly pretensions to nobility, for the court is the earthly counterpart of the Heavenly Kingdom, its king God's representative. Elsewhere Dunbar has no scruples about clearly indicating the targets of his wit--for example, Norny and Quintayne in "Of Sir Thomas Norny"; therefore, as nobles do not appear in either "The Turnament" or the "Amendis", it is only the pretentious tradesmen who are under attack.

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[27] However, it must be noted that the last cavalry charge occurred in the First World War some four hundred years later.

[28] "The Amendis made be him to the Telȝouris and Sowtaris for the Turnament Maid on Thame"; see above, note 3.

[29] Scott, p. 229.

"The Iusting betuix Iames Watsoun and Ihone Barbour" was written by Sir David Lindesay "at command of King Iames the Fyft."[30] Its original was probably an actual burlesque joust at a tournament in 1539 or 1540, if line 1 naming the day and place, Saint Andrew's and Whitsun, and line 5, "In presence of the Kingis grace and Quene", may be taken at face value. Marie of Lorraine, James V's Queen, did not arrive in Scotland until Whit-Sunday, 1538 and could not have reached

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[30] Afterwards referred to as "The Justing". Citations are from The Works of Sir David Lindsay, ed. D. Hamer (Edinburgh: S. T. S., 1931). (Spelling of "Lindesay" restored to original form.)

Sanctandrois the next day, "Witsoun Monnunday" (1). As James V was dead before Whitsun, 1541, only the tournaments of 1539 and 1540 are possible sources for an actual "royall rink" (63).[31] If lines 4 to 6 are taken as a unit,

> Wes neuer sene sic Iusting in no landis,
> In presence of the Kingis grace and Quene,
> Quhare mony lustie Lady mycht be sene

it is possible to interpret them to mean that James and Marie were not present and that neither were their ladies: that only men had "Come for to se that aufull Tornament" (8). The term "royall rink" towards the poem's end is then heavy sarcasm, mainly inserted to give the rhyme for "stink". In either case the obvious denigration of the champions still holds, and the tournament between James and John would have had to be within the same time span, for James Watsoun's employment by James V started in 1538 and ended in 1541.[32]

Alternatively, the poem could be a complete fabrication written in response to James' musing on how those champions would comport themselves in the lists; then there are several possible sources. Lindesay was probably at the tournaments of the Black Knight and Black Lady in 1507-08 and at the single combat between the Laird of Drumlanrick (Sir James Douglas) and the Laird of Hempsfield (Sir Robert Charteris) in 1520. Of the latter event Robert Lindsay writes:

> Bot quhen the day was sett and they com-
> peiret at Edinburgh in the barras both

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[31] See notes to Hamer, Works of Lindsay, III, pp. 140-41 for a full discussion regarding the dating of "The Justing".

[32] *Ibid*.

> inairmeit at all pairtis, Drumlanric being something sand blind and saw notcht weill and straik so furieouslie and so heate at his marrow, quhill he knew [nocht?] [sic] quhither he hat him or nocht; bot in the meane tyme the Laird of Hempsfield suord brak betuix his handis and then the king gart cray to the heraldis and men of armes to red them and so they war stanchit and faught no more. [33]

Either of these tournaments, or burlesque aspects of other tournaments, could have provided material for "The Justing".

As far as literary sources are concerned, MacLaine would have us believe

> Lindsay owed to "Christis Kirk" not only the incidental rime and one or two other details . . . but also to "Christis Kirk" and "The Turnament" the suggestion for the basic satiric method of his poem. . . . The clumsiness of the "campiouns" is suggested by the absurdities of the archery contest. [34]

Henderson agrees with MacLaine that there is some evidence of influence or borrowing in lines 27, 33 and 34 of "The Justing":

> (Quod Ihone) howbeit thou thinkis my leggis lyke rokkis
> . . . .
> ȝit thocht thy braunis be lyk two barrow trammis
> Defend the, man! Than ran thay to, lyk rammis

Compare lines 38, 129 and 194 of "Christis Kirk":

> his lymmis was lyk twa rokkis
> . . . .
> Bet on with barow trammis
> . . . .
> Ran vpone vther lyk rammis [35]

True, the archers in "Christis Kirk" are about as able to shoot as the doctors of "The Justing" are to fight in the lists but, considering the large amount of Lindesay's occasional poetry, he probably drew "The Justing" from life, burlesque tournaments he attended at court, or the single combat cited above, which was fought because of mutual charges of treason. As for the rime, "Christis Kirk" has every other line rhyming, whereas "The Justing" is in heroic couplets. As far as "Than ran thay to, lyk rammis" is concerned, this is conventional rhetoric in medieval descriptions of combat; parallel phrases occur in many romances and heroic lays. There seems a world of difference between fighting with barrow trammis and having legs like them, although the borrowing of "lymmis . . . lyk twa rokkis" (38) is probable. "Christis Kirk", together with other accounts of peasant brawls, undoubtedly influenced the tone and content of "The Justing". For example, lines 19-20 of "The Justing"

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[33] *Pittiscottie Chronicles*, I (1899), pp. 397-98.

[34] A. H. MacLaine, "The Christis Kirk Tradition," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 2 (1964-65), 112.

[35] T. F. Henderson, *Scottish Vernacular Literature* (London: David Nutt, 1898), p. 107.

> And wichtlie waiffit in the wynd thare heillis,
> Hobland lyke Cadgeris rydand on thare creillis

find a parallel in "Peblis to the Play".[36] They are drawn from the "cadger" who "of . . . tumblit, the creilis" from his mare (152) and who leaped on it only to have "The girding brak" so that "he flew of/ and upstart bayth his heilis" (157-58). Lindesay's image of the cadgers riding on baskets, hobbling about--a possible sight at Shrove Tuesday festivities--is even more ridiculous. The poem has no original that is recognizable as such and it is therefore neither parody nor travesty.

[36] The text consulted for "Christis Kirk" and "Peblis to the Play" was the Maitland Folio Manuscript.

As the poem was written at the King's command, it is safe to say that its audience was the court. The combatants are of the King's chamber, albeit tradesmen rather than nobles. This poem, then, is a work mocking the rising middle class and its pretensions. The two "champions" were probably happy enough to partake in the joust until they finally had to wield lance and sword, when they were so frightened that they soiled themselves, thinking the few minutes they had been in the lists, hours. Instead of waiting for the heralds to part them, they stopped fighting, James declaring "It is ane hour sen I began to tyre" (62). Initially their weapons "Full womanlie thay weildit" (18) and at the last they were reduced to using boxing gloves. Knights, if completely disarmed, might use their fists as did Harrowde when Duke Oton's men sought to take him. His gloves were of mail, however, not "plait", and he did not "dang at vtheris facis" ("Justing" 58), but he "smot his enemy wiþ his fest þo,/ Þat his nek-bon brak atvo" (Guy 5437-38 Auch). The two champions in all their endeavours do not even burst one another's noses, for "Louying to God, that day was sched no blude" (68). While the narrator's tone is condescending, he renders the event in heroic couplets, which rendering makes the work a burlesque, for otherwise it would be merely a humourous account of burlesque incidents. Lindesay's opening is serious enough, but "Wes neuer sene sic Iusting in no landis" (4) becomes ironic when viewed in the light of the rest of the poem. For the modern reader the fun does not commence until line 18, where "Full womanlie" causes a reconsideration of the nature of the champions and the tournament. Lindesay's contemporary audience would not have had this delay for, knowing the champions and the event (if it took place), they would have enjoyed the satire from the beginning. Lindesay juxtaposes "aufull Tournament" (8) with "gentill James Watsoun" (9) so that he somewhat prepares any audience for the burlesque tournament. His champions are incompetent with spears; James' "did fald amang his horssis feit" (24) and his control in the second rink is no better, for "amangis his hors feit he brak his speir" (38); meanwhile John, going to the other extreme, "his mark tuke be the mone" (26) and before he can run the second time, his spear breaks. Between rinks, James and John exchange challenges, oaths and insults, among which are lines or parts of lines that could be from romances: "My speir is gude" (28); "Than ran thay to, lyk rammes" (34). But the parody is incomplete: for the lines to be valid they need to be recognisable, and here Lindesay is using common romance lines to maintain the romantic sense of his poem rather than holding the genre up to ridicule. The parodic element is therefore both incidental and accidental. When the champions turn to swords, John cannot draw his out for rust, and James "mist the man, & dang vpon the lystis" (48) where "His swerd stak fast" (50).[37] John, when his sword comes out, "Straikand at Iames, his swerd flew in the wind" (54). They continue their verbal contest.

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[37] Compare *Guy of Warwick*, 10299, 10231 (15th century version): "And hym smote so . . ./ . . ./ That hys swyrde stycked faste".

The humour of "Than gentill Iames began to crak greit wordis/ Allace! (quod he), this day for falt of swordis!" (55-56) is increased by James' and John's normally using language suited to their station in the exchanges. Lindesay's main technique to produce humour involves the demonstration of the disparity between his heroes' speech and the way they should speak, and contrasting their fighting with chivalric combat. In writing the poem he presumed his audience had the same norms of language and conduct as himself and that the barbers' unintentionally grotesque imitation of knights would delight his noble listeners as much as it pleased him.

Throughout "The Justing" Lindesay has not been coarse, and it is a shame that for the culminating anticlimax he should have to insert "into the feild mycht no man stand for stink" (64),[38] although one has to appreciate the pun "for dirt partis cumpany", which would not work without the intimation that the "campiouns" had befouled themselves.[39] Whether "Thare hors, harnes and all geir was so gude" (67) is ironic is known only to his immediate audience. Because of the popularity of tournaments, which had gained the approval of the Church by becoming mainly pageantic, it is unlikely that the final line was intended to condemn tournaments in which blood was shed. "Louying to God, that day was sched no blude" (68) was an expression of Lindesay's pleasure at neither of the two gentlemen of the King's chamber having been harmed in giving entertainment to more noble courtiers by their comic joust.

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[38] Although one might expect some coarseness from lampoon satires of this period or from low comic poems, one would not expect the personal slander of fear causing defecation in a burlesque intended for the enjoyment of even those ridiculed. The Scots poets, reflecting the generally low sense of humour of the Scottish court, unfortunately frequently stoop to the use of such details, which tend to reduce the poem's audience and move the work towards satire. See above, p. 125 and below, 139-140. Petronius' Satyricon contains several accounts of public defecation and vomiting when showing up the vices of overindulgence of nouveau-riche Romans; therefore there is a history of coarseness in satire.

[39] "Dirt parts company" is a proverb meaning that good company breaks up or that many leave the group when "dirt", a disagreeable person, joins it.

Alexander Scott's "The iusting and debait vp at the drum/ Betuix W$^{\underline{am}}$ adamsone and johine sym"[40] is written in the "Christis Kirk" stanza: ababababcd, *c* being the bob whilst *d* is the refrain, which undergoes slight variation. The singsong of the rhyme prevents this from being considered a serious work right from the beginning. The opening, with the comparison of the stalwart knights to Mars, Hercules and Rowland's peers, is mock heroic. The courage and obduracy of the two champions is shown in the third verse, only to be thrown into doubt by what is probably the best use of the "Christis Kirk" bob, the following of "And in the quarrell keild" (26) by "Or slane", which sounds redundant, except that *keild* meant "knocked over" and not "killed" to the Scots. The line "ffor sym wes bettir sittin" (35) would probably recall Dunbar's

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[40] Afterwards referred to as "The Justing and Debait". All citations are to the *Bannatyne Manuscripts*, pp. 343-48 (I). Also consulted were *The Poems of Alexander Scott*, ed. A. K. Donald (London: E. E. T. S., 1902) and *The Poems of Alexander Scott*, ed. J. Cranston (Edinburgh: S. T. S., 1896).

"The Turnament" and Lindesay's "The Justing", the implication being that Sym was more courageous than Will. The fourth verse gives the boast of one champion, Sym. The fifth stanza's picture of luxury, of what might be expected at a true tournament, serves to depose the pretensions of the champions and their entourage: there are "deinteis deir", although readers are to "dowt" that "the wyne on broich it ran" (40). What the peasants might have as "deintis deir" are found in stanza 11: "nowdir lad nor loun/ Mycht eit ane baikin loche/ ffor fowness" (97-98), their other food being venison.[41] "Trumpettis and schalmis w$^t$ a schowt/ playid or the rink began" (41-42), presumably the work of heralds; and to see what "right" God would show, there are "eikwall" judges. Everything is ready for a chivalric encounter with "styngis"[42] which ironically turn out to be "twa blunt trincher speiris squair" (46). When the spears are called for, they cannot be found, for a friend of the champions has hidden them. Instead of laying on with swords they dismount, disarm and go to eat, only to find "The fyre wes pischt out lang or none/ Thair dennaris suld haif drest" (79-80). They are more angry at this than they ever were at each other, swearing oaths like true knights "to syn and mone" (73) that

[41] Probably poached; see *Rauf Coilȝear*.

[42] "Styngis" was a synonym for *penis* at this time. A sexual interpretation of the poem is not valid, however, despite the symbolic value of a friend's unmanning them without their knowledge. Nor could the competition have been a heterosexual one, for Will had won this in advance by making Sym's girl pregnant. There is nothing in the poem to warrant an homosexual reading.

he who did the deed should "ban þat he wes borne" (89). On the evidence of the champions' performance thus far, the culprit has nothing to fear. The mock heroic and chivalric elements of the poem more or less stop at this verse; from here on it is a simple peasant brawl.

The contestants now go to Dalkeith, where they make merry. During the feast the tradesmen in their drunkenness swear eternal brotherhood, following which Sym tries to incite Will to fight. Will refuses and is consequently mocked by Sym and the others. Sym, riding to a crag top, challenges Will to follow, and blunders down the ravine. As for Will, "To grund for ferseness he did sunder" (147), paralleling in irony Sir Thopas' being weary of riding "on the softe gras/ So fiers was his corage" (ST 1969-70).

Sym, returning to the field, is described armed with a sword and buckler and wearing a jack,[43] as a yeoman should. He has by his ride proved his superiority to Will, whom he had declared was "moir lerge of lyth and lym/ Nor I am be sic thre" (122-23). Throughout the work it is Sym who is the "bettir" and Will the "worss" of line 28.[44] Will's view of the "tournament" is expressed by "bettir we bath wer byand hyddis/ and weddir skynnis at hame/ Nor heir" (115-16). He has, after all, nothing to gain by the fight, as he has made Sym's girl friend pregnant, deserting her despite his promise to wed her if she "lat him play". Sym, who has lost the girl, although it seems she is not much of a loss, has a

[43] A padded leather garment.

[44] "One wes bettir, one wes worss/ I would it to be witten".

desire to revenge the preference of his beloved for another, or her fall from grace. If the former, he is being unchivalric and is the villain of the work; if the latter, he is the hero. As the poem in its entirety makes him the hero, the second alternative may be presumed correct.

The main emphasis in the poem is on Will's cowardice. Initially both Sym and Will are presented as equals; it is only after the "feast" and drinking at Dalkeith that Will is denigrated. Drink gives Sym more courage so that he "bukkit will on weir" (105) and, when Will refuses to fight, he recklessly rides down a steep "bra" in "sic a blunder" (149) that Will (possibly more sober than Sym) "to ga . . . wes agast" (150). The crowd, in reaction to Will's refusal to fight or ride, despise and mock him, making him "dred for blame" (112). They laugh both at Sym's Dutch courage and Will's reluctance, while supporting Sym in appreciation of the sport he is providing. In ambiguous parallel statements they even consider punishments for Will's cowardice. The poet intended the audience to imagine a group of drunken peasants staggering around, some calling out "Knock Will down", others "Push him off the cliff" or "Hang him", whilst the less drunk say "Wait until you get him". The ambiguity arises because Scott only inserted "cryd" into the first line of this section[45]

[45] "Sum cryd the Koward suld be Keild;/Sum doun the hewche he thrang;/Sum ruscht, sum rumyld [and] sum reild;/Sum be the bewche he hang" (173-76). For other examples of this type of parallelism compare the earlier "Tournament of Tottenham" champions' return home with their wives' help: "Sum on dores and sum on hech/Sum on hirdillis and sum on crech/And sum on welebarraws" (205-07), and later, in "King Berdok", "Sum bed tak, sum slay, sum bad byd quhill they get him" (36).

so that "Sum doun the hewche he thrang" (157) could be read as "Will pushed some of the crowd over the cliff", while the praise and condemnation of the next line could fit either Will punishing or being punished. Both would have found favour with the good-natured drunken mob out for fun and not blood. Will is not punished; he obviously is not hanged, for in the envoy we are told "quhairfoir he tynt þe feild þat day/ And tuk him to ane mill/ To hyd hym" (187-188).

Scott's debt to "Christis Kirk" is fairly obvious,[46] but whereas James' is a general brawl, Scott has no fighting. His champions are all bluster, and one is forced to wonder how Sym would have reacted had Will taken up his challenge. Scott's use of "Allaiss . . . for falt of law/ That bargan get I nane" (174-75) is reminiscent of Lindesay's "Justing": "Allace! (quod he) this day for falt of swordis!" (56); and, in ending with the curfew bugle, Scott's poem parallels "The Justing", which ends with the curfew bell. Despite its borrowed stanza form, a few lines like those noted above, and its possible reference to "Sir Thopas", there appears to be no original in literature for any of the poem.[47] The first seventy-six lines contain the majority of the poem's chivalric elements, although there is some return to the romance form in the last two stanzas.

Like Lindesay, Scott omits nearly all coarse elements from the work. He includes them only in the first two of the last three verses. He makes fun of the tradesmen through their steeds by saying "Thair avairis fyld vp all the feild/ Thay were so fow and pang/ w$^{t}$ drafe" (160-61).[48] In other words, the horses were as drunk as their masters and less able to control themselves. The second "jest" is at the expense of "gelly johine" or Sym, for when he rides into the field, "Befoir his curpall wes a crak/ Culd na man tell quha maid it" (169-170). So either Sym farted as loudly as a horse, or the horse farted.[49] That the characters are plebeian hardly needs mentioning; Will and Sym in fact are tanners[50] who arrogate single combat to their estate, yet they stop the contest on discovering their lack of spears. They do not fight as true knights would, with swords, although Sym could have done so and Will, if he had no weapon, should have been able to borrow one.

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[46] See J. Cranstoun, The Poems of Alexander Scott (Edinburgh: S. T. S., 1896), p. 107; also Henderson, pp. 247-8.

[47] See above, p. 137.

"The Justing and Debait" is another work written for the delectation of courtiers. As the poem's resolution is accomplished without bloodshed, it is implausible to consider it a denunciation of chivalric encounters. Neither is the nobility a target for mirth, since the behaviour of the antagonists and their supporters falls so short of imitation of true knights and ladies, except in the early mock heroic stanzas where the language rarely approximates that of romance. The poem barely qualifies as burlesque, seeming merely a comic image of peasant life rather than un éclat de rire at the pretensions of the lower class.

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[48] "The horses defiled the field/ They were so full stuffed/ with husks of brewing malt".

[49] It is obviously not the noble animal of romance but kin to those of "The Tournament of Tottenham".

[50] See "bettir we bath wer byand hyddis/ and weddir skynnis at hame" (115-116).

"King Berdok"[51] must be the shortest complete metrical romance written. Its author hits the style of the genre with his rhythm, structure and content. Within a mere forty-eight lines one finds the appeals to auctorité of many longer works, warlike expeditions for the sake of love, divine intervention and noble protagonists. All are undercut through good-natured satire, making it unlikely that the author disliked the genre he was burlesquing.

The poem opens by addressing one Sym of Lyntoun, informing him when, where, and to whom the events occurred. Line 5 gives the status of the hero, while lines 6-10 tell how he lived. Line 10 also includes "as myne auctor sayis", a typical claim of the medieval poet that he was merely a translator, not a creator. Laing suggests that there was in fact an original being burlesqued, "although it may now be impossible to ascertain the individual work."[52] If there was an original, it was probably one of the tales of Tom Thumb which had appeared in the mid-sixteenth century.[53]

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[51] In D. Laing, Early Popular Poetry of Scotland, II (London: Reeves & Turner, 1895). All citations are to this text. Also see the Bannatyne Manuscripts.

[52] Laing, foreword to "King Berdok", p. 211. The only king to "ȝeid naikit" in the romances is Havelok the Dane.

[53] Published versions of Tom Thumb are early seventeenth century. One is dubiously attributed to Richard Johnson (London, 1621), while another, with an anonymous author, was published in London by J. Wright in 1630.

Whether it possesses an original or not, "King Berdok" retains its ability to amuse solely as a mock poem. Even to those who have never studied romances, some accomplishments of the "king" are obviously at variance with the concept of a knight. Playing the Irish harp may have been an accomplishment for an Irish hero, but how would the Scots or Northern English consider it? Playing the lute was a recognized skill, but how can the poem's "Weill cowd he play in clarschot and on lute" (11)[54] be taken seriously when the next line, continuing the sentence, says that the bow he bends is "ane aiprin bow" and that he shoots well backwards or at an angle? The bathos of this line also casts doubt on "He wes ane stalwart ma of hairt and hand" (13), which follows it. The king's accommodation, a cabbage stalk in summer, a cockleshell in winter; his love being a cuckoo, a "princess" who milked kine; his weapons, one bow and bolt--all serve in the *reductio ad absurdum* of what is elsewhere treated seriously.[55] The humour of Berdok's throwing his love into a creel before he bears her away on his back is an obvious contrast with any romance in which a lady is kidnapped: for example, Sir Tyrry's abduction of Oisel in *Guy of Warwick*

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[54] Similar lines may be found in romances; for example, in *Lybeaus Desconus*: "Myche he couþe of game/ Wyths sytole, sautrye yn same/ Harpe, fydele and crouþe" (136-8 Cotton).

[55] The crossbow was unsuited for chivalric encounters, was generally used by European mercenaries, and was not as efficient as the longbow. The beloved is always noble--not a cuckoo--and never, not even in the Constance/Griselda type of story, does a princess act as a milkmaid.

(4591 ff. Caius). Berdok does not even get the right bird but takes home a nest of owls. Presumably Berdok, like many knights of romance, has never seen his beloved; she would be a typical lady of courtly love tradition, if the audience did not know her to be a cuckoo. Berdok has loved his princess seven years, four more than she has existed, and is therefore obviously more in love with the concept of love than with the maid herself. The author does not cease his ridicule of courtly love here; by making Mayiola's father "The King of Fary" (29) he renders Berdok similar to Thopas in his "love-longynge for . . ./ . . ./An elf-queene" (ST 1962, 1978) and extends his scope to those works with fairy protagonists before continuing to include those romances having a plethora of kings for the hero to defeat. When pursued, Berdok hides in a cowshed--a reasonable hiding-place for an incognito hero --where he is besieged by the Kings who have bows, tree stumps and sages[56] (presumably military experts or Merlin-like men); the kings then call up guns (a detail which shows the relatively recent date of this work) but the apparent seriousness of the siege is bathetically lowered by the bullets' being of radish. Towards the end of the poem, a beautiful touch is afforded by the shift into the mock heroic genre through the introduction of the "Gods", whose intervention is reminiscent of the closing portion of Aristophanes' *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*. The resolution of the conflict is completed with "honour" to both sides. But what use is honour or love to a bracken bush?

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[56] The text has "Wt bowis & brandis w$^{t}$ segis thay vmbeset him" (35), segis being glossed as "sages", which is awkward in the context of a person's being used as a weapon. The reading of segis as "siege engines", weapons like trebuchets, scaling-towers and rams, which would be used by invading forces in their attempts to take besieged towns, is preferable. This interpretation would better fit the context and heighten the burlesque in that major weapons of war were being used in an attempt to break into a lowly cowshed defended by one man. None of the Scots dictionaries or glosses containing segis have alternatives to Laing's reading, and he may be their source.

"King Berdok" is rounded off by a final appeal to *auctorité* , that of Boece, and the moralistic ending of a fabliau. The moral is at once a truism and a self-contradiction: "Tho$^{t}$ lufe be sweit, oft syiss it is full sour" (48), causing the poem's audience to reflect on all those works in which the knight strives in battle and tournament for honour to make him worthy of his beloved.

The Scots works are generally inferior to those of the English; their coarse crudity is of the childish washroom variety rather than the more robust bawdy humour of "The Tournament of Tottenham" and "Sir Thopas". The only poem to avoid this fault is "King Berdok", the best constructed and most interesting work: unfortunately, one for which the author is unknown. The other burlesques lack originality; Dunbar in "Of Sir Thomas Norny" does not attempt his own mock poem but plagiarizes Chaucer; Lindesay utilizes phrases and incidents of "Peblis to the Play" and "Christis Kirk" in recounting a probable actual event; Scott borrows the "Christis Kirk" stanza in his presentation of what is essentially a peasant brawl or kermesse, while drawing on Dunbar's and Lindesay's burlesques.

Excepting "King Berdok", they lack range; all are burlesques of tradesmen written for a noble audience. Those mocked would be unable to enjoy the humour of the poem; the sowtars' and tailors' demand for an apology was met by Dunbar's "Amendis", which heaps more scorn on them. The poets are skilled, but the impression left by many of the works is of slapdash workmanship, of poems written without proper attention to detail. The authors are not burlesquing literary works, again with the exception of "King Berdok", and here if there is an original it is now lost; they are not experimenting with verse forms, but merely giving a humourous picture of their chivalric society as it was debased by the lower classes or by the nobles in their pageants.

## CONCLUSION

Probably other medieval burlesque romances exist besides those discussed above. There are definitely poems which contain such burlesque elements: for example, the third of the fifteenth century "Burlesques in Prose and Verse from a Manuscript in the Advocates' Library of Edinburgh",[1] which from internal evidence deals with an event in Derbyshire;[2] and "Symmie and his Bruther",[3] whose date, from the language, must be of the first half of the sixteenth century. The Advocates' Library burlesque opens with the sun and stars setting at dawn as the moon is rising, before telling of a housewife's drink-sodden sleep. It continues with the readiness of the knowledgeable horsemen of Radforde to expound on spavin, and Tom the tippler attempting to discover from the Bible what would happen [to the furnace or at the melée?] on a frosty morning. The chivalric elements commence with the battle of Brakonwete, where the bear jousted, Sym and the swineherd were sworn brothers, and the hare and the hearthstone hurtled together, while the humble-bees' hood was hacked all to pieces. Chivalric music is provided by a drake and a sheep, who have the part of heraldic trumpeters, and subsequent entertainment is provided by the hog dancing on a dunghill to a horn pipe. The poem changes again with the advent of strong men with "more than a little" (18) to discuss about everything, who wish "pryce for to wynne" (916) and to know "How Reynall and Robyn-Hod runnon at the gleyve" (19).[4] Here the work enters the peasant brawl genre with its reference to Robin, who was a common king of May Day festivities, replacing the more ancient pagan deity. The fertilization aspects of the green man are brought out in the remaining lines, for someone

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[1] Ms. Jac. V 7, 27, quoted in Reliquiae Antiquae, ed. T. Wright and J. O. Halliwell (1841; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966). The language seems later than the fifteenth century, being more comprehensible than many Scots works.

[2] Bartholomew's Gazetteer of the British Isles (Edinburgh: Bartholomew & Son, 1972) has only Radford in Nottinghamshire (2½ miles northwest of Nottingham) near a Holbrucke (in Derbyshire 6½ miles southeast of Sheffield). These two villages are about 25 miles apart and close to Sherwood Forest, which is associated with Robin Hood. Ragnell is the name of Gawain's wife in the northwestern English tale of "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell" which is localized in Lancashire and Cheshire, two proximate counties. It would seem from the above that the burlesque originated in this area and that scribal emendations account for Scots forms in the text. There would be little point in a Scot making fun of townspeople in the northwest of England, for a Scots audience would not appreciate the jest.

[3] Laing, Early Popular Poetry of Scotland, pp. 6-10. Laing writes, "It might be difficult to assign the present poem with any degree of certainty to a particular date" (p. 6).

> . . . . . . . . . . [sic] eȝht wemen nere
> And makyd hom with child
> (20-21)

The omitted line or lines probably gave, quite explicitly, more details of the sexual activities of the feast. The poem, from its diction, is Scots, and its author can clearly produce good alliterative verse. In some ways it is a much shortened

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[4] The May Queen was usually Marion, not Ragnell. From lines 20 and 21 the audience may form an opinion as to the kind of lance that was being broken.

"Tournament of Tottenham" except for the lack of participation of peasants in the fighting. The main purpose of the poem is given through

> Therof seyus clerkus, y wotte how,
> That it not be rehersyd now
> (25-26)

for although the poet is apparently uncommitted, merely giving amusing epiphanies of the people's lives and their festivals, in these lines a note of regret that clerics are forbidding such recreations is perceptible. There is no hint that the poet approved of the carnality of the holiday, but in his ridicule of peasants and May Day festivities there is tacit approval of traditional feasts. Were it not for the housewife, the horsemen, and Tom being depicted outside the peasant brawl/mock tournament context, the entire work would have to be considered a chivalric burlesque. As they are separate from the festivity, the work becomes rather a hudibrastic burlesque emphasising the peasants' affectation of knowledge, of "mychewhat", together with some ridicule of chivalry through the jousting, besides taking a sympathetic glance at anachronistic mutated survivals of pagan religion whose continuation is threatened by Christianity.

"Symmie and his Bruther" is mainly concerned with two pseudo-palmers who make a good living as beggars in St. Andrew's. The burlesque of chivalry occupies the latter half of the poem. Sym's brother is the one who is to fight, but after initially agreeing to do so he has to be forced towards the place of combat. His horse breaks loose, and Sym volunteers to "just as I can/ Sen he is strickin doun" (123-24) and dons armour reminiscent of that worn at Tottenham. Unfortunately for Sym, his opponent is Squire John of Mowis, who strikes him in the mouth, extending it a span. The joust ends with Symmie being attended by a doctor whilst the crowd disperses. The chivalric content of the poem is limited; a few references are intentionally ambiguous, while

> The ladis came to luk him;
> To tak a justing of þat javell,
> The bryd wount no$^{t}$ to bruk him
>
> (72-74)

provides some of the bawdy humour the reader would expect from a work written in the "Christis Kirk" stanza. The stanzaic form causes the audience to anticipate something of the nature of a peasant brawl, but there is comparatively little fighting. Admittedly the joust was to occur because of a dispute over a woman, but a single encounter describes it and no details are given of the peer group pressure exerted on Sym's brother to make him fight. Reading the carefully constructed verses, the audience is forced to recall Scott's "Justing and Debait" and to wonder whether the two Symmies are one and the two poems accounts of the same incident, with the squire being added to further denigrate the champions. If so, then "Symmie and his Bruther" becomes even less of a burlesque and more of a satire. As Sym is the name of one of the characters in the third burlesque of the Advocates' Library, it seems probable that the names' being the same is a coincidence.

Besides poems like these which contain chivalric elements, there are works which may be burlesques of romance but whose intention is not clear. Eliason suggests that Chaucer's "Squire's Tale" is a parody of romance structure,[5] while Lindesay's "Squire Meldrum"[6] is classified by the Early English Text Society as a burlesque romance.[7] Smith says that "Meldrum" is a

> careful copy, to the minutest detail, of Chaucer's sketch of the young squire in the prologue to the Canterbury Tales; and [Lindesay's] praise of the eyes of the lamented Queen Magdalene is in the very words which Chaucer humourously applies to the twinkle of the wanton and merye Friar.[8]

Renwick and Orton, however, consider that it is "just a stylised biography"[9] while C. S. Lewis declaims:

> The strange idea that the poem is a burlesque, unless it is based on the first fifty lines or so, may come from the love scenes where much chivalry, good sense and wholesome sensuality are mixed with much humour. But the humour is not burlesque.[10]

If it is a burlesque, it is an unfortunate one, for it suffers from the faults it is supposedly mocking. The reader wishes Harry Bailly would appear to cut it off as he did "Sir Thopas". Although Lindesay may have plagiarised Chaucer for occasional lines, and although there is some similarity between the description of the squire and the depiction of Meldrum, the parallels are not as close as Smith would lead the reader to expect. Neither, taking the poem as a whole, are the occasional absurdities such as

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[5] See above, p. 86, n. 73.

[6] "Squire Meldrum", in Lindesay's Works, ed. Hamer.

[7] W. Renwick and H. Orton, The Beginnings of English Literature to Skelton (London: Cresset Press, 1966 1939), p. 116.

[8] G. G. Smith, Periods of European Literature: The Transition Period (New York: Scribner, 1900), P. 65.

[9] Renwick and Orton, p. 116.

[10] C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 103.

> They did bot kis, as I suppois it:
> Gif uther thing wes then betwene,
> Let them discover that Luiferis bene
> . . . .
> In that meine time, this ladie fair
> Ane douchter to the squyer beir
> (1153-62)

and the bathetic lowering of the squire:

> He won the pryse abone theme all
> Baith at the Buttis and the Futeball
> (1047-48)

sufficient to qualify the work as burlesque. The reader must conclude with Renwick, Orton, and Lewis that the work is a romance. He might also remember having enjoyed some sections, such as the attack on Ireland, but he is unlikely to regard the work as a burlesque ridiculing Meldrum or parodying other romances.

It now becomes necessary to consider how successful the authors of the burlesques of chivalric romances were in using the material to hand, in indicating the foibles of society or literature that they wished to correct. The Scots authors, Chaucer, and the "Tournament of Tottenham" poet, who chose to glance at peasant and burgher pretension, were doomed to failure in correcting it (no matter how successful their depiction), for society is vitalized by men striving to become, or to remain, at the top. Chaucer himself, being the son of a burgher knight, was proof that descendants of Sir Thopas and Sir Thomas Norny and even (had they later been knighted) of James Watsoun and John Barbour might be true gentlemen. The last three in particular had immediate knowledge of the court, and their children (like Chaucer) growing up there would fit easily, if peripherally, into the society.

Dunbar in "Of Sir Thomas Norny" attacked another clown, Curry, whose children (if any) might have learned gentilesse at court. This second fool is recorded in the Treasurer's Accounts as having a knave; it would seem therefore that he was accommodating himself to court practice in acquiring a squire and, because of the reference to his having defiled two saddles, it may be safe to assume that he had also essayed the lists. Given that there is such a thing as good breeding and that some people are born "common", however, it is possible that none of the children of those connected with the court would ever be truly noble.

That combat in the lists might be a target in Lindesay's "Justing", Scott's "Justing and Debait", or Dunbar's "Turnament" is improbable, for the jousts were too popular with the courtiers for the poets' ridicule. Individuals they could and did mock; even the King was not exempt; but to burlesque a favourite pastime of all their fellows would have so little served their own interests that the possibility hardly requires consideration. The "Tournament of Tottenham" poet, however, having no such personal reservations, attacked the practice of fighting in tournaments, which was so much less an affectation in his time than when the Scots poems were produced. The author may even have influenced the nobility in the replacement of some of the fighting with a pageant, while the burghers, following court fashions, modified their competitions, and the peasants limited their festivities to feasts, wrestling bouts, archery contests and dances. Chaucer does not condemn his nouveau riche bourgeois knight but deplores the possibility of unsuitable applicants' purchasing knighthood. Indirectly he could be condemning Richard's avariciousness, which made knights like Thopas possible. The message probably would be apparent to the king and his advisors despite Chaucer's hero being Flemish. The general dislike of pretension shown in The Towneley Plays and Froissart's Chronicles demonstrates the existence of an audience capable of appreciating the ridicule of debased knighthood in "Sir Thopas" and of peasant imitation of knights in "The Tournament of Tottenham".

Excepting for "Berdok", which is a pure literary burlesque, all the Scots poems are concerned with historical characters. Therefore the reader might expect to discern a more exact view of Scots life from them than he would of English life from those works produced South of the border. Because the poets presume on their audience's knowledge of a particular incident and its participants, such is not the case.

Both English and Scots works emphasise the pretensions of peasants and tradesmen to nobility. The pretensions are illustrated by tournaments in which the level of diction varies from the apparently normal speech of the champions to a more elevated, obviously assumed language. This shift in level of speech is also observable in those combatants of somewhat higher rank, the doctors of the King's chamber.

The characters of "The Tournament of Tottenham", in contrast to the Scots heroes, assume a higher form of diction not as part of their arrogation of tournaments, but to ridicule those they imitate. The impression produced by the "Tournament of Tottenham" is one of peasant enjoyment of an activity which, because of the probable disapprobation of their "betters", has added spice. The Scots works, on the other hand, show peasant and burgher dourly and conscientiously imitating nobles. The lower class Scots get no pleasure from their activities; the pleasure is all for the poet's specific audience, and only the drunken rabble of "The Justing and Debait" have inherent life--and that, too, is charged against them as a further source of humour for the court audience. Will's and Sym's supporters might agree that the poet had drawn a realistic picture of their behaviour, but it is hardly likely that they would have enjoyed the account, whereas the peasants of the English work would probably have signified approval of their delineation with roars of laughter.

Peasant and bourgeois impressions of courtly life were largely derived from the stories told by itinerant minstrels who frequently knew little more than did their audience about the court. Their erroneous depiction of noble life was ridiculed by Chaucer and the anonymous "Berdok" poet. While much of the humour of both works arises from the courtly love tradition, particularly the longing for the unknown beloved, the use of tags, of stereotyped descriptions, and of the other features of romance discussed earlier, make their donation to the audience's enjoyment of the burlesque.

Although Scots authors drew on their audiences' experience of chivalric encounters to cause laughter at the grotesque imitations of tournaments they recorded, a conflation of the elements of their burlesque jousts outlines a typical historic tourney. The "Tournament of Tottenham" poet does not presume knowledge of historical events, using instead romance tournaments for the original against which his tale must be measured.

The poems incidentally tell much about life in the Middle Ages. "Sir Thopas", obviously intended for oral presentation, shows how the minstrel who had a poorly constructed tale which relied heavily on stereotyped action and phraseology had to ask repeatedly for his audience's attention. It depicts the typical nouveau riche knight who knows gentilesse only from minstrels' tales. The audience is told of his appearance, the description of which includes his use of makeup, many pieces of armour, and clothes brought from all over the known world (thereby showing Britain's trading area). Thopas' abilities in archery, hunting, and wrestling, normally activities of the middle and lower classes, are recounted. Mention is made of common herbs and spices, specific pieces of armour ornamented with jewels, musical instruments, throwing spears used by hunters who had extensive woodland through which to travel, rich men who kept jesters and minstrels, the British attitude toward Flemings, the drinking of water, wine, mead and beer, besides certain major literary works (both secular and lay) common to the time.

"The Tournament of Tottenham", besides providing further examples of some of the items cited above, gives an instance of a festival at which the peasants do not fight. They do, however, mock persons of a higher rank by using elevated diction; the poet thereby also ridicules the Southern peasants' speech for his Northern audience. The fight a week later involves married men who wish to show their valour, besides those single men who fight for the right to marry Tyb. The battle is fought with peasant weapons--flails--and champions have blazoned shields to identify them. Marriage, feast and tourney are associated in the "Tournament of Tottenham" as they frequently were historically. A feature of medieval politics is demonstrated by the use of a tournament to find a husband for the lady, so that the aging father lacking sons could continue to enjoy the property he had won in his prime. The poet points differences between noble and peasant through their horses, the chastity of their women, their wealth, armour, and temperance. May games, which would vary according to rank and which for the peasants sometimes involved vicarious retaliation on a superior, are also included.

Lindesay's "The Iusting betuix Iames Watsoun and

Ihone Barbour" supplies, amongst other details, that the King and Queen were sometimes present at feast-day festivities. He also shows that people of his time appreciated puns and had their own adages. Scott's "The Iusting and Debait vp at the Drum betuix $W^{am}$ adamsone and johine sym" adds that men differed not only morally but in their horsemanship, that they might accomplish seduction through a promise of marriage, that drink may provide Dutch courage, and that peasant warriors wore a "jack" and carried a sword and buckler.

Dunbar's "Of Sir Thomas Norny" expands our knowledge by demonstrating the rivalry that occurred between poets and also between court jesters. It shows, too, that the Scots believed in ghosts and used Jordan-water containers as chamber pots. His "The Turnament between the Tailyour and the Sowtar" supplies the advanced notice given of tournaments, the use of heraldic devices or pennons to facilitate the identification of champions, besides recounting how champions were "convoyit . . . vnto the feild" (8).

A certain coarseness which tends to be used in the calumniation of character becomes apparent from several of the Scots works. The English poems have only one instance of bathroom-type humour, and it is probable that it is not a character but a horse that farts. Bawdy allusions seem more to the taste of Chaucer's and the "Tournament of Tottenham" poet's audience than the crudity which presumably was enjoyed by Scots courtiers.

"The Tournament of Tottenham" and "Sir Thopas" expose the vanity and foibles of the upper class through examination of the pretension to nobility of the middle and lower classes as shown by grotesque imitations of chivalric actions. "Sir Thopas" and "King Berdok" mock plebeian and bourgeois concepts of knighthood for the delectation of all capable of appreciating this form of literary criticism. The less effective burlesques, however, merely emphasise the pretensions of those burghers or peasants involved in mock tournaments without ridiculing knights and lords. The well-constructed "King Berdok", like many romances, has no reference to the common people.

All the burlesques are mock poems and most are mock romances, while "The Justing and Debait" has a mock-heroic opening and ending and "King Berdok" has a mock heroic resolution. It is only through the nature of "The Justing and Debait"'s opening and closing that it is eligible for consideration as a burlesque work, for although its plot is concerned with the defense of a lady's honour, the method of resolution is far from ideal; without the mock heroic elements it would be just another comic poem like Dunbar's "Of ane Blak-Moir" with a leaning toward the peasant brawl tradition.

"The Tournament of Tottenham" is within the peasant brawl genre, but its adherence to the forms of romance tournaments, its use of somewhat elevated diction, and its raising of the matter of a peasant wedding to that of a noble one renders it a mock romance. The satire of the poem is good-natured, and even the peasants could enjoy the humour of their depiction.

The burlesque may be defined as a genre in which

> a comic imitation of a mannerism or a minor fault either in style or subject matter is contrived to arouse amusement rather than contempt or indignation.[11]

The audience for which a work is suitable then becomes an indication of its value as a burlesque. "King Berdok", "Sir Thopas", and "The Tournament of Tottenham" are capable of entertaining all levels of society. Although these better burlesques aroused neither contempt nor indignation, Dunbar's "Turnament" caused both. It was suitable only for the court audience for which it was written and, although members of other trades may have been delighted by the "putting down" of these two guilds, the sowtars and tailyours were indignant and Dunbar in his "Amendis" was contemptuous. The poem is a social satire whose claim to be a burlesque must rest on Dunbar's use of romance tournament elements. The contempt arises more from the poet's use of denigrating personal description rather than the tradesmen's demonstrated lack of chivalric ability. Lindesay's "Justing" suffers from the same insulting coarseness, but to a lesser extent, and it is possible that the two doctors could enjoy the joke at their expense.

The most able burlesque poets are clearly Chaucer and the anonymous author of "The Tournament of Tottenham", with the inventor of "Berdok" close behind. Dunbar is mainly remembered for his aureate verse, and it is possible that one of his poems in this style should be considered his masterpiece rather than the Seven Deadly Sins/Pageant/Tournament dream vision. Although this tripartite poem may be his most imaginative work, particularly in the first section, "The Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo" excels it in execution. "Sir Thomas Norny", Dunbar's other burlesque romance, besides its denigration of Sir Thomas, Curry, and Quhentayne, may be a parody of Southern taste, as the inclusion of Southern spellings possibly indicates, or no more than a lampoon in romance form whose words show Chaucer's influence. Plagiarism in the Middle Ages did not carry pejorative connotations; an imitated poet, providing he was not ridiculed, would accept the other poet's copying him as an accolade. Artists copied works of an acknowledged master as part of their training, their apprenticeship being judged complete when they were able to produce a close copy of the original. Therefore Dunbar's using "Sir Thopas" for his exemplar is a greater acknowledgment of Chaucer's ability than is his inclusion as the preeminent poet in "The Lament for the Makaris".[12] Similarly, Scott's use of the "Christis Kirk" stanza could be construed as a compliment to the King James who wrote it.[13] Scott

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[11] Barnet et al., Dictionary of Literary Terms.

[12] "The noble Chaucer, of makaris flour" (50).

[13] Both James I and James IV have been proposed as the author of "Christis Kirk"; neither case is conclusively proven.

improves on James' use of the single-foot line and may even be considered superior to Chaucer in its employment. Lindesay, like the authors of "The Tournament of Tottenham" and "King Berdok", does not borrow his verse form from a particular work but uses a verse form common to many romances, while Chaucer, using lines from many works, incorporates them magnificently into a cohesive whole, easily smoothing over difficulties caused by different stanza forms.

Social burlesques may only be fully enjoyed by those who know at least as much of the nature of a poem's context, of the foibles that had passed from fashion, and of the current vagaries on which the poet turns a merry eye, as did the work's original audience. Literary burlesques readily reveal their jokes, because the works that the poet mocks or uses to ridicule facets of his society are normally available for comparison. The modern reader is not so concerned with the politics or didacticism of a burlesque, for he is removed from the period in which a particular foible needed correction, and he therefore may enjoy the humour of such works without feeling that he is found wanting.

Didacticism is as much a part of the burlesque as is the humour, so that a brief examination of the didactic thrust of the works discussed earlier will help to show the value of a particular poem to the genre, and whether its claim to be a burlesque rather than a comic poem or a satire is tenuous. "Of Sir Thomas Norny" has little claim to the genre, for the solitary lesson that may be drawn from it is that only suitable persons should be made knights. Dunbar's "The Turnament between the Tailyour and the Sowtar" also teaches this, as well as stating that those who show their unworthiness should be deprived of knighthood. The "Turnament" in addition implies that members of a particular class should not try to enter a higher one: a lesson that provides the sole thrust of Lindesay's "The Iusting betuix James Watsoun and Ihone Barbour" and Scott's "The Iusting and Debait vp at the Drum betuix W$^{am}$ adamsone and johine sym". "King Berdok" is a literary burlesque which appeals for an improvement in content and style of stories, besides its re-examination of courtly love, a tradition which the author of "Berdok" considers ridiculous. "The Tournament of Tottenham" combines literary and social criticism. By the use of alliterative verse the poet could be teaching his audience that Southern and Continental innovations in verse are not necessarily better than the traditional English forms, while his conscious poor alliteration explains that only good alliterive poetry should be written. The author decries jousting and reiterates the appeal of the Scots poets for people to support their own estate and not to destroy the existing social structure. "Sir Thopas"'s criticism is more extensive than any of the others; like "The Tournament of Tottenham", it criticises literature and society. Through the poem Chaucer tells the knight to examine himself in order to ensure that he is not like Thopas. He asks the middle class to remain middle class and not to become knights unless they have true gentilesse. Courtly love, by Thopas' example, is shown to be an affectation which does not ennoble man but makes him ridiculous. Chaucer also marks the faults of the romance genre for correction, finding errors in content, structure and verse in the poems he parodies and melds into his own mock poem.

The mock romances considered show a wide range in the literary ability of their poets, in the social and literary criticism they contain and, consequently, in the pleasure they can give. Both literary and social burlesques are interesting to the modern reader for the light they throw on the poet's time, in showing the critical and creative abilities of its people and, most of all, in showing that they laughed at the same kind of jokes and puns as does the reader: that basically medieval man is not too different from twentieth-century man.

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# APPENDIX

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